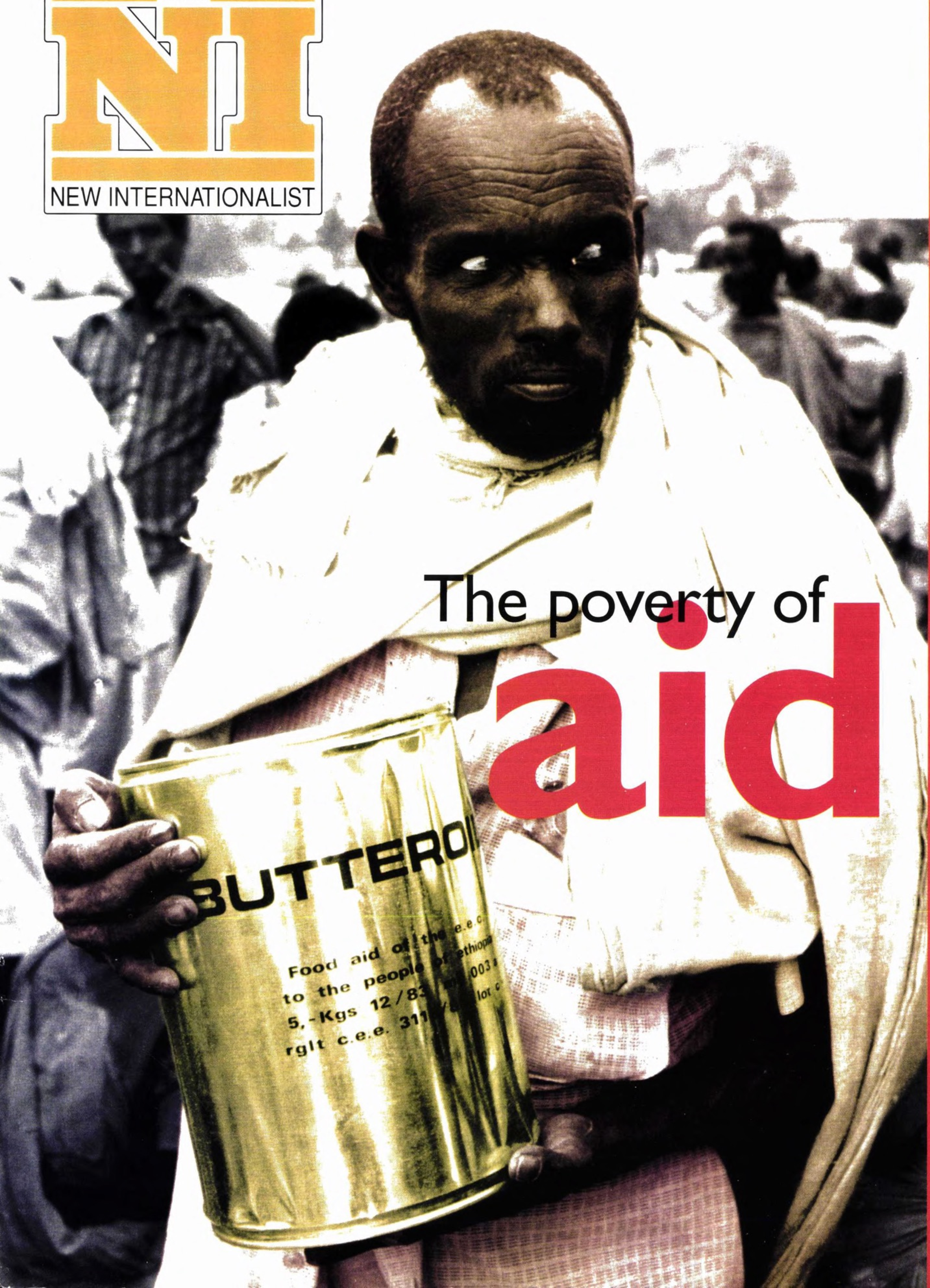
No. 285 / NOVEMBER 1996

THE NI
NEW INTERNATIONALIST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THE PEOPLE, THE IDEAS, THE ACTION IN THE FIGHT FOR WORLD DEVELOPMENT

COMING NEXT **MONTH**

Seduced by technology

The human costs of computers

CRISPIN HUGHES / PANOS

It's impossible to avoid the hype about new communication technologies and the 'information highway'. In a few short years 'surfing the net' has become a household phrase. Meanwhile key questions about who can afford the technology, who controls the information flow and who loses in this 'third wave' shift to the information age remain unanswered. Next month's NI asks whether new technologies can help build a more just world or whether the machinery itself will lead to our future undoing. Featuring...

- **Ned Ludd Live!** The man who gave his name to the Luddites makes it to prime-time.
- **My own private net.** Big business targets the Internet.
- **A guy thing.** Can women make a place in cyberspace?
- **Silicon Valley east.** High-tech comes to India.
- **Dumbing us down.** Why computers don't belong in school.
- **Activism on-line.** Fighting the powers that be in Bangladesh.
- **Automatic unemployment.** Computers are saving labour by getting rid of workers.

COMING SOON: THE STATE OF THE WORLD ◆ ENDANGERED SPECIES ◆ ETHICS

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The New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

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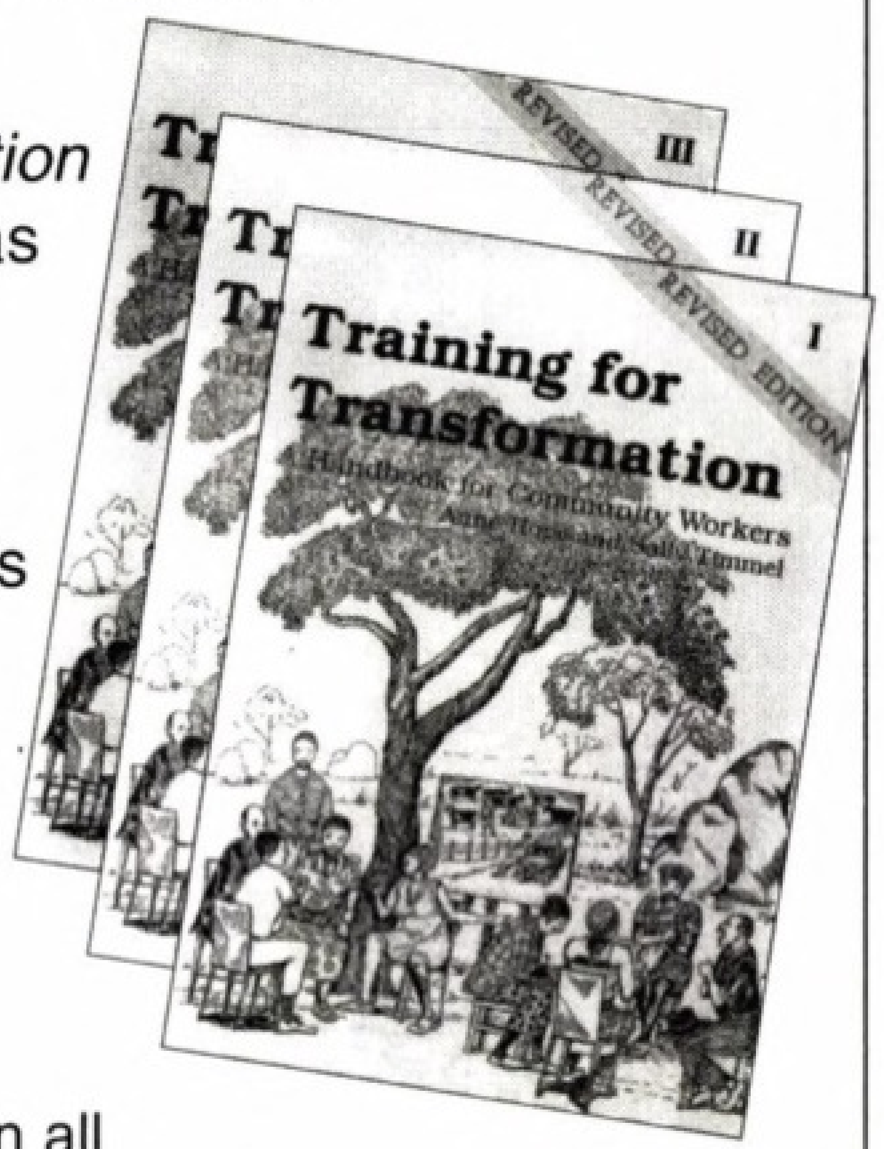
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FRONT COVER PHOTO FROM ETHIOPIA BY MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES. MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **IAN NIXON**

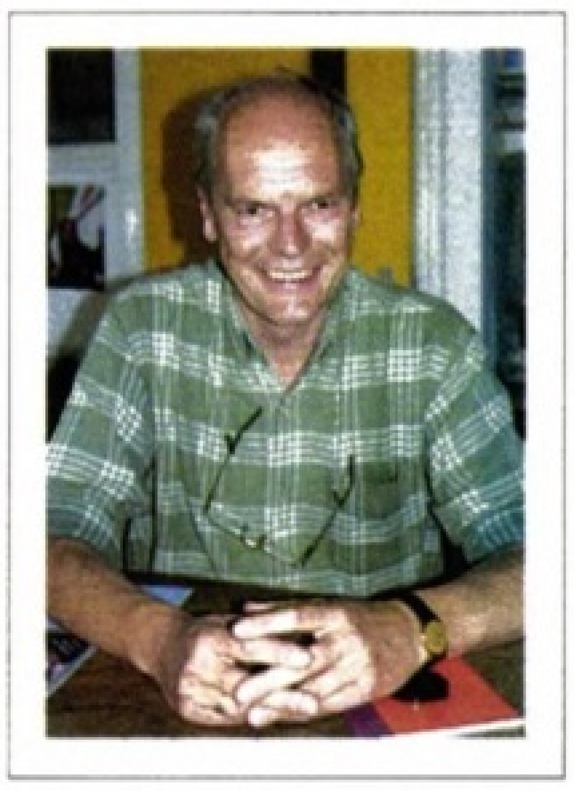
THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Aid

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

I SHOULD have known better. When I set to work on this topic I thought I was dealing with a foregone conclusion. Of course the **NI** has always advocated more and better aid to the 'Third World'. Naturally you, our subscribers, would feel much the same way. Logically, now aid is in serious trouble, we would put our backs to the wall and join in the campaign to support it.

So it was with some confidence that I set about the research; the usual round of telephone calls, meetings with experts, visits to libraries and bookshops, trawls through the continuous stream of paper that arrives at our office from every corner of the earth. These days there's the Internet to consider too, though for me it's still more a question of surfing in hope than arriving at any decipherable destination.



Before too long I was ready to go with the magazine itself. I outlined a few of the usual points about 'good' and 'bad' aid, sharpened them a little with references to the latest 'crisis', blunted them again – the byways and distractions of a discussion are an irresistible attraction for me – and set off. Perhaps I felt less sense of adventure than I sometimes do, but at least I had firm ground beneath my feet.

What I had forgotten was that if you start off with a foregone conclusion you're liable to go astray. I'd decided to compile a feature for the magazine based on interviews with a cross-section of informed opinion, from Mexico to Ghana, Zimbabwe to India. Such calls still don't come cheap; time differences, language problems and the quality of the line can have a deterrent effect.

In drawing up my original plans, I had not fully tested out my ideas at the receiving end of aid, in the South. Spurred on by the fact that it was now high summer in the North and everyone was on holiday, I made a point of trying to put this right. And before very long I had, I felt, little alternative but to change my ideas and produce a different magazine altogether.

I realized that I had made a fairly basic initial mistake. I had been carried away by all the theories of aid and development, the plans, the projects, the prescriptions. What I should have been thinking about was not theories and things, but people. That's easy to say and extremely difficult to translate into practice. One then has to begin somewhere else, with a sense of equity and solidarity between people. This, in the long term, is the only solid ground we all have beneath our feet.

David Ransom

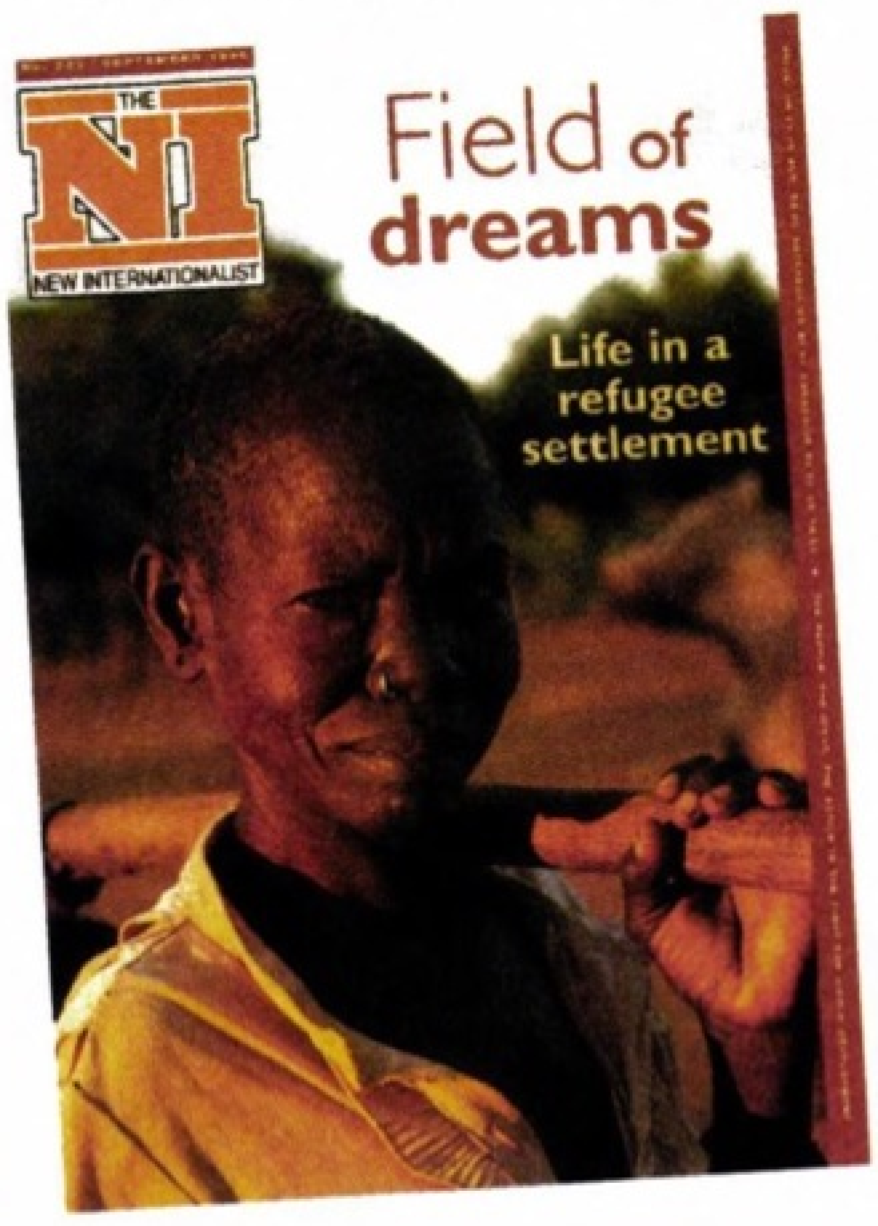
David Ransom
*for the **New Internationalist** Co-operative*

Letters

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address and e-mail is inside the front cover.

Fortress Europe

You were courageous to have dedicated an issue (***Field of Dreams* NI 283**) to the plight of refugees when Fortress Europe is building ever stronger walls to protect its luxurious and peaceful cities from the few refugees that may reach its shores.



Many of us have seen the emanation of very restrictive immigration laws. These mainly affect the welfare of refugees who by necessity rather than choice have sought refuge and asylum in the civilized economically developed countries which claim to be observers of basic human rights. How about an issue on the situation of refugees in Europe?

Mohammed M Ali
Bromley, England

Prison writing

Your issue on ***Criminal Justice*** (**NI 282**) was excellent, identifying that the more materially advanced countries of the West and North have little reason to feel complacent about their penal policies. Here in Britain our government has chosen to emulate the most punitive aspects of the North American system, accepting ever higher costs for more prisons, whilst cutting back on education, health and social welfare.

Your short directory of the 'Prison Press' could not possibly include all the excellent prison-based writing in circulation, but mention should be made of 'Prison Writing', a high-calibre British publication with international contributions. For example, the most recent issue contained poems by Ken Saro-Wiwa and Javier Tuanama Valera, a journalist detained in Peru for alleged terrorism. More information from PO Box 478, Sheffield, S3 8YX.

Laura Kerr
Sheffield, England

Invisible islands

I was surprised to find Richard Dawkins' *River Out of Eden* (Classic' **NI 283**) presented as the only alternative to the religious Right's creationism. It is no more that than Reagan-Thatcher-Gingrich are the only alternative to creationism. Dawkins is using his imaginary battle with the creationists to slander his real foes – biologists who are developing a new, less mechanistic understanding of life. The real world is both messier and more creative than Dawkins suggests. Organisms are just as physical as machines, but unlike them, are capable of regeneration and reproduction.

Contrary to Darwin and Dawkins, evolution comes less in gradual adaptation and selection than in bursts known as 'Punctuation Equilibrium'. The emergence of complex intelligent creatures (elephants, whales, humans) is less the outcome of struggle and competition than a by-product of other processes such as increasing size and prolonged childhood. We are neither inevitable nor purely accidental.

The difference makes a difference. Recognizing that evolution consists less of 'invisible hands' than 'invisible islands' means developing a model of political ecology vital to an alternative approach to our political and social problems.

David Keppel
Essex, Connecticut, US

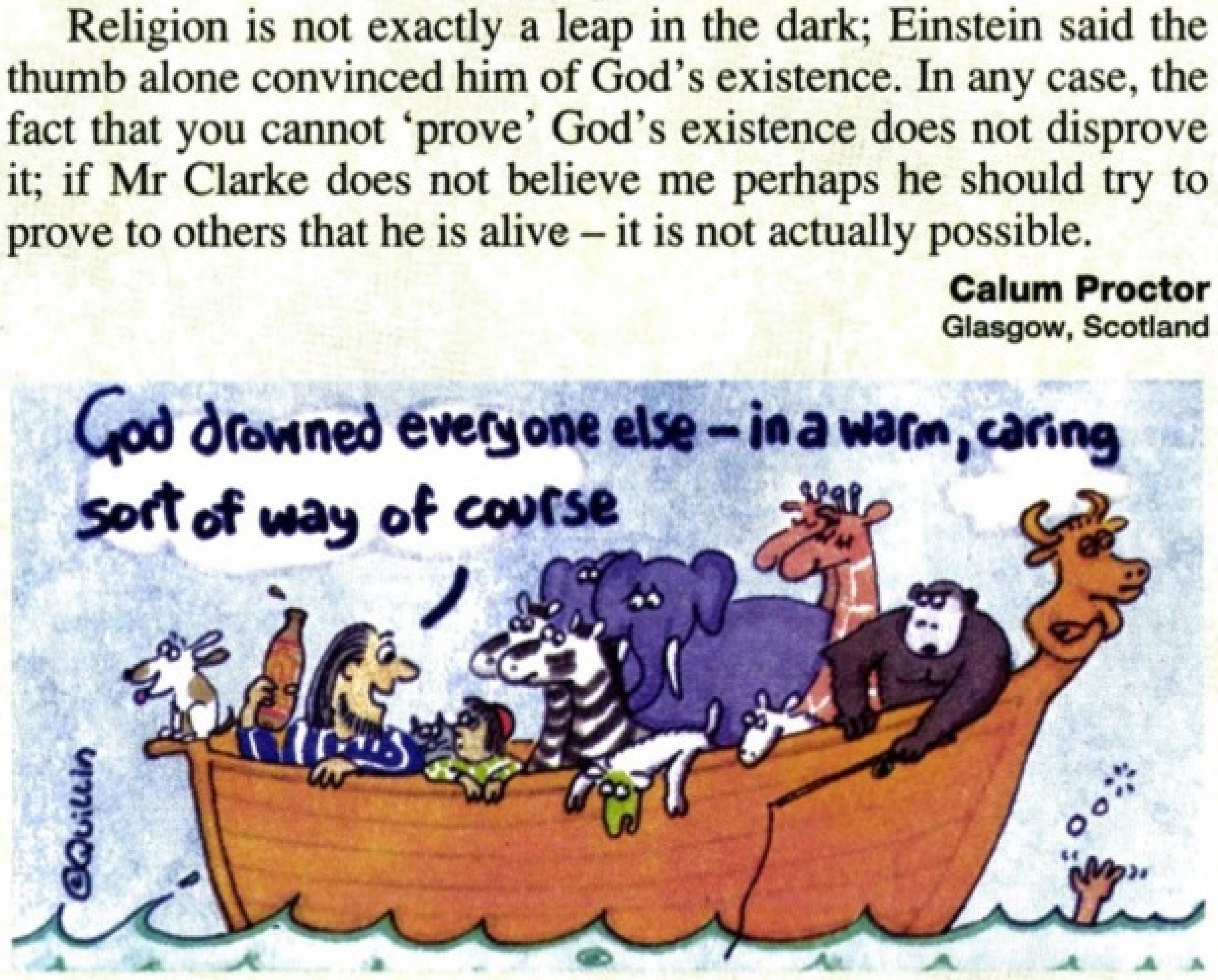
Imperfect science

Len Clarke (*Letters* **NI 283**) appears to believe that the natural extinction of species disproves the existence of a loving God, whilst conveniently overlooking the inclusion of (for instance) the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah within the Bible. Religion has never claimed that the Lord does not destroy.

Similarly, his comparison of 'solid' science with 'unproven creeds' is not without fault. Not only does he forget that science is unable to provide perfect and unchanging explanations for everything, but he also ignores the historical evidence which reinforces the Bible story.

Religion is not exactly a leap in the dark; Einstein said the thumb alone convinced him of God's existence. In any case, the fact that you cannot 'prove' God's existence does not disprove it; if Mr Clarke does not believe me perhaps he should try to prove to others that he is alive – it is not actually possible.

Calum Proctor
Glasgow, Scotland


God drowned everyone else – in a warm, caring sort of way of course
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VIV QUILLIN

Children in prison

Here in Honduras, the Constitution prohibits children being jailed together with adult prisoners in the same cells. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child does too. But it doesn't seem to matter – the judges do it anyway.

Over the past 18 months, hundreds of boys – some as young as ten – have been raped, tortured and murdered by other male prisoners and prison authorities as they are warehoused with hardened adult criminals. Despite Casa Alianza (see **NI 276** on ***Homelessness***) having taken the State of Honduras to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights there are still dozens of children in jail.

The Honduran authorities have threatened to shut us down. We continue to fight. **NI** readers are supposed to be activists, so please help us. Write a polite, short letter to President Reine, Casa Presidencial, Tegucigalpa, Honduras or e-mail <embhondu@netcom.com> and ask why they are making their children suffer so. And please, send me a copy.

If we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem.

Bruce Harris
Casa Alianza, Honduras
(www.casa.alianza.org)

Beyond Beijing

Thank you for the positive review of our video *Beyond Beijing* (**NI 282**). Readers might like to know that our contact number is (44) 171 737 6824 and not the one printed in the reviews. They might also like to know that a Spanish version is now complete and is available in both PAL and NTSC formats.

Shirini Heerah
Producer, ***Beyond Beijing***
London, England

Zapatista violence

In an issue (***Join the Resistance!* NI 279**) filled with inspiring stories of people around the world who have united in non-violent response to oppressive and corrupt 'powers-that-be', how could you include the Zapatistas (EZLN)?

While the Zapatistas fight

against scourges that destroy human dignity they are a force that took up arms as the only solution to the woes lived on a daily basis in Mexico. They have always been an autocratic organization that has disparaged those indigenous community leaders and citizens in Chiapas who opted for the peaceful path. They are feared by the populace. They co-opted 35 years of peaceful, non-violent and creative work of solidarity and initiative led by Bishop Samuel Ruiz.

Violence begets violence. The institutional violence of a system that disparages its population begets the violence of rebel groups which in turn begets more violence and repression from various sectors of society.

Civil society in Mexico is beginning to reap the fruits of work begun in earnest after the massacre of students in Tlatelolco in October of 1968. Let the gathering force and moral weight of these organizations and networks work peacefully to bring about a just democracy and a society more attendant to the needs and desires of its members.

Please don't raise up on pedestals the short-sighted responses to the ills of society.

Jim Petkiewicz
Maryknoll, Oaxaca, Mexico

Correction: Cathy Majtenyi ('In your face' in ***Criminal Justice* NI 282**) works for the *Nation* in Nairobi and not the *Nairobi Herald.*

READERS SURVEY
Thank you!
We sent out a readers' survey to a randomly selected group of readers. We have had a fantastic response – thanks to all who replied. Both the statistics from the forms and your individual comments will help us to fashion the magazine over the coming year.

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.

LETTER FROM **RUSSIA**

Strange justice

It should have been an easy matter for **Olivia Ward** to pursue her suit against Sergei Grachev, the driver who broke her bones in a car accident last year (see **NI 276**). But she finds herself faced with an unexpected moral dilemma...

It was seven in the morning when the electric-shock buzz of the doorbell drilled into my weary eardrums. In front of the door stood a small elderly woman with a plastic bag. From it she drew a slip of paper, and with the satisfied grin of a hit-man who has hit his target, slapped it into my hand and disappeared.

'You are summoned for an interview with the District Prosecutor,' I read sleepily. 'You must report under the law.'

What had I done? Visions of Cold-War style KGB journalist intimidation swam through my head.

The prosecutor's chief investigator, a plump jolly young man, set my mind at rest.

'You remember Sergei Grachev?' he asked. 'The man who injured you in the car accident last winter?'

My heart sank. While numerous *vors* – kingpins of Russian crime – kicked up their heels in the city's most expensive nightclubs, the Moscow police were tireless in their quest to bring this faceless felon to justice.

It was, no doubt, ridiculous that I was so keen to close the case. After all, Grachev's wild manoeuvres on an icy Moscow thoroughfare had left me with several broken bones and a mangled corpse of a car last winter.

Shortly after the crash, the traffic police told me that Grachev would not be charged unless I brought a suit against him. But as the pain disappeared and my anger faded, so did my desire for retribution.

What was the point of trying to wring a few roubles out of a penniless (and now jobless) deliveryman? A tidy sum to ease my recuperation in a sunny Tuscan retreat would have been welcome. But this was too little and too late.

For months it seemed that the police had forgotten the incident, one of thousands of near-fatal crashes they deal with each year. But surprisingly, the long arm of the law reached out to Grachev.

'What you have to understand,' said the investigator, lighting yet another cigarette, 'is that if you don't testify in court, he'll go to jail'.

'If I *don't* testify against him?'

'Exactly. The judge will say that there are no financial claims against him so he'll have to be punished behind bars.'

Reeling from this strange information, I could barely smile at the irony.

'Of course it's up to you,' said the investigator, with a shrug that dismissed the eccentric squeamishness of liberal Westerners.

Back in my office I consulted an ominous report that had been sitting on my desk for a week. 'Crime, Criminal Policy and Prison Facilities in the Soviet Union,' made queasy reading, and I had put it aside for a time when my stomach was feeling particularly strong.

Now I thumbed through pages detailing outrageously overcrowded, lice-infested, airless and evil-smelling dungeons where prisoners routinely asphyxiated, went mad or caught debilitating and fatal diseases. Some survived only to die after their release.

The verdict was in. A stretch in a Russian jail was a potential death sentence. Far too extreme for the feckless but not monstrous Sergei Grachev.

SARAH JOHN

As luck would have it, my summons to court arrived dated one week after my annual holiday was to begin. Already packing for the trip, I was seized by a new bout of trepidation. What if they barred me from leaving the country until the trial was over?

'Don't worry,' the judge's clerk told me. 'If you just write a letter confirming your statement to the investigator, everything will be fine.'

'And Grachev?'

'He'll go to jail.'

I groaned. The thought of any human being condemned to a living hell, even indirectly because of me, was too much. Could I enjoy my holiday haute cuisine when this wretched man was picking cockroaches out of his gruel?

Cursing Grachev, not for the first time, I sat down to write.

'This man may have had my death on his conscience. But I was lucky enough to survive. Now I refuse to have his death on mine.'

Returning to Moscow a month later, I called the court. Was my clemency plea taken into account?

'Definitely,' said the clerk. 'Grachev was let off with a small fine. It was entirely due to your letter, which was very unusual.'

I felt a moment of sharp relief. But outside the window, winter clouds were gathering. Soon there would be ice on the roads. ■

Olivia Ward is bureau chief for the *Toronto Star* in Moscow.

Update

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Another dam, another way of life

Namibia's Himba threatened

NAMIBIA'S achievements in building and sustaining a multiracial democracy out of a war-ravaged country have been remarkable, but there is evidence that the worldwide 'dash for growth' has at last arrived. A government-sponsored hydroelectric scheme on the Kunene River now threatens the Himba people, a tribal minority known for their egalitarian, sustainable lifestyle. Having survived the war largely unscathed, the irony is that peace now promises to tear their ancient way of life apart.

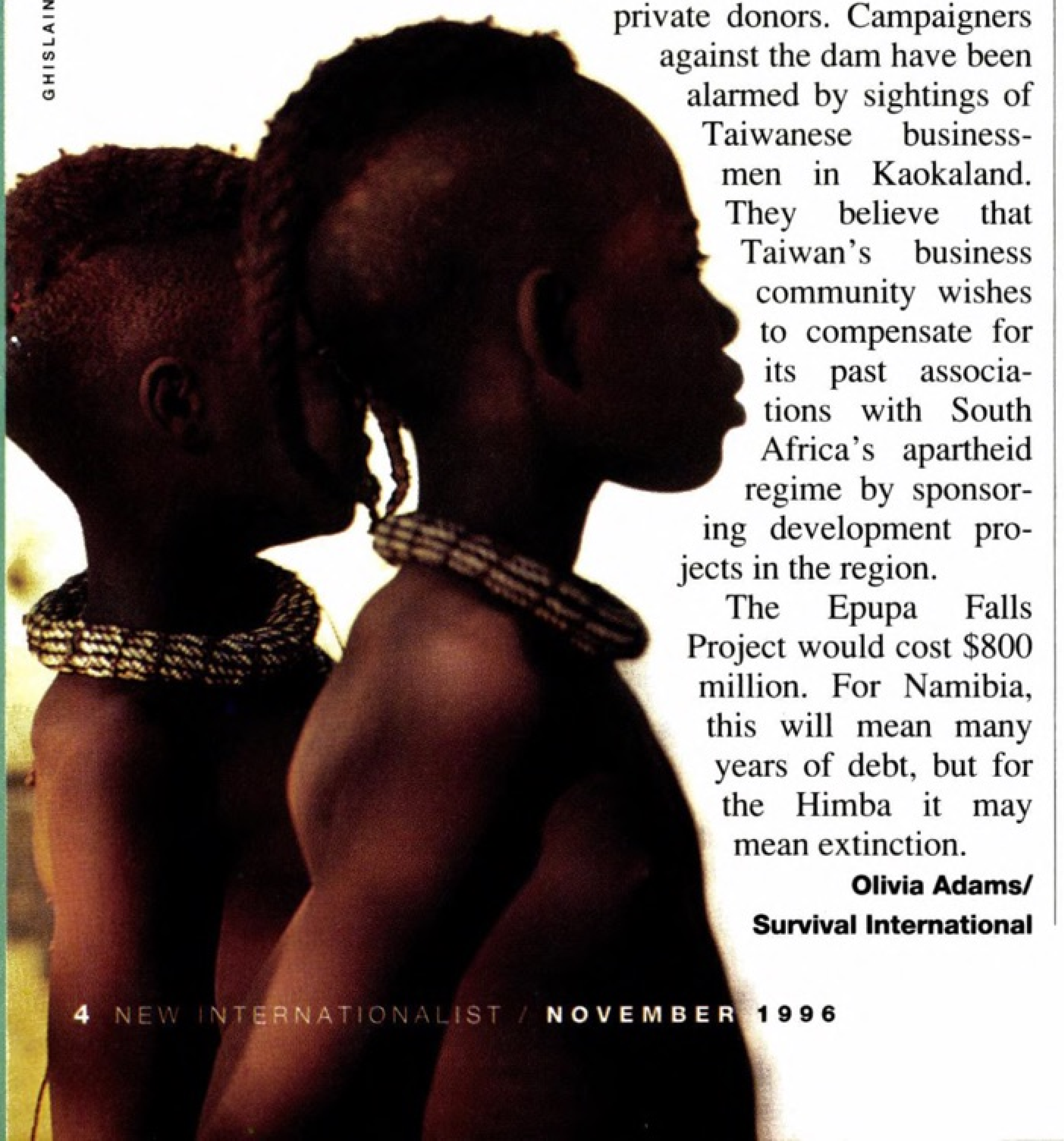
The Himba, a cattle-raising pastoralist people, live in Kaokaland on the Angolan border close to the beautiful Epupa Falls, the site of the proposed dam which would flood their land, destroying their pastures, burial sites and everything they need to survive. Whilst they are a nomadic people, they do not travel vast distances like the Bushpeople, but confine themselves to a relatively narrow, fertile area dominated by the river. When the grass grows thin, they move on, although often the old and the dying stay behind, provided with food and water by their families as they await death. Tall stone burial mounds can be seen throughout Kaokaland. When tribe members pass a mound, they pick up a stone and add it to the pile, as a mark of respect.

The proposed dam could, by submerging 464 square miles of essential dry-season grazing, displace more than 4,000 Himba in Namibia and flood their burial grounds. If a site lower down the river is chosen – as seems increasingly likely following protests by Survival International and other organizations – the impact on pasture and other land resources would be less extreme. But with an estimated 3,000 workers brought in, nearly all from outside the region, a 'temporary town' would arise on Himba territory with disastrous consequences for their health and social stability.

So far aid donors have had little enthusiasm for the scheme, regarding it as an unnecessary extravagance, but Namibia's government sees it as a symbol of progress and independence. It seems likely that the government will turn to private donors. Campaigners against the dam have been alarmed by sightings of Taiwanese businessmen in Kaokaland. They believe that Taiwan's business community wishes to compensate for its past associations with South Africa's apartheid regime by sponsoring development projects in the region.

The Epupa Falls Project would cost $800 million. For Namibia, this will mean many years of debt, but for the Himba it may mean extinction.

Olivia Adams/ Survival International



GHISLAIN PASCAL / SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL

Just do it

Shame-faced Nike executives have agreed to explore the issue of independent monitoring of overseas factories. This follows extensive press coverage of a five-city tour in the US by Cicih Sukaesih who was fired from a Nike subcontractor's factory in Indonesia in 1993 following her part in a strike to demand a rise in the minimum wage.

In the factory where Cicih worked, employees were paid below $1.30 a day and abuse was rife. 'There were some [managers] that liked to hit people, slap people,' said Cicih. 'There were some who would kick the Muslim workers when they were praying during their lunch break.' In 1992, Nike contractors signed a code of conduct, but the minimum wage, now $2.26 a day, still leaves workers below the poverty line. Minimal breaks, forced overtime and intimidation are still commonplace; wrongfully sacked workers like Cicih have no recourse. It now remains to be seen whether the promise to look into independent monitoring will be translated into action and will end the quest for ever-cheaper labour.

Press for Change / Global Exchange

Non!

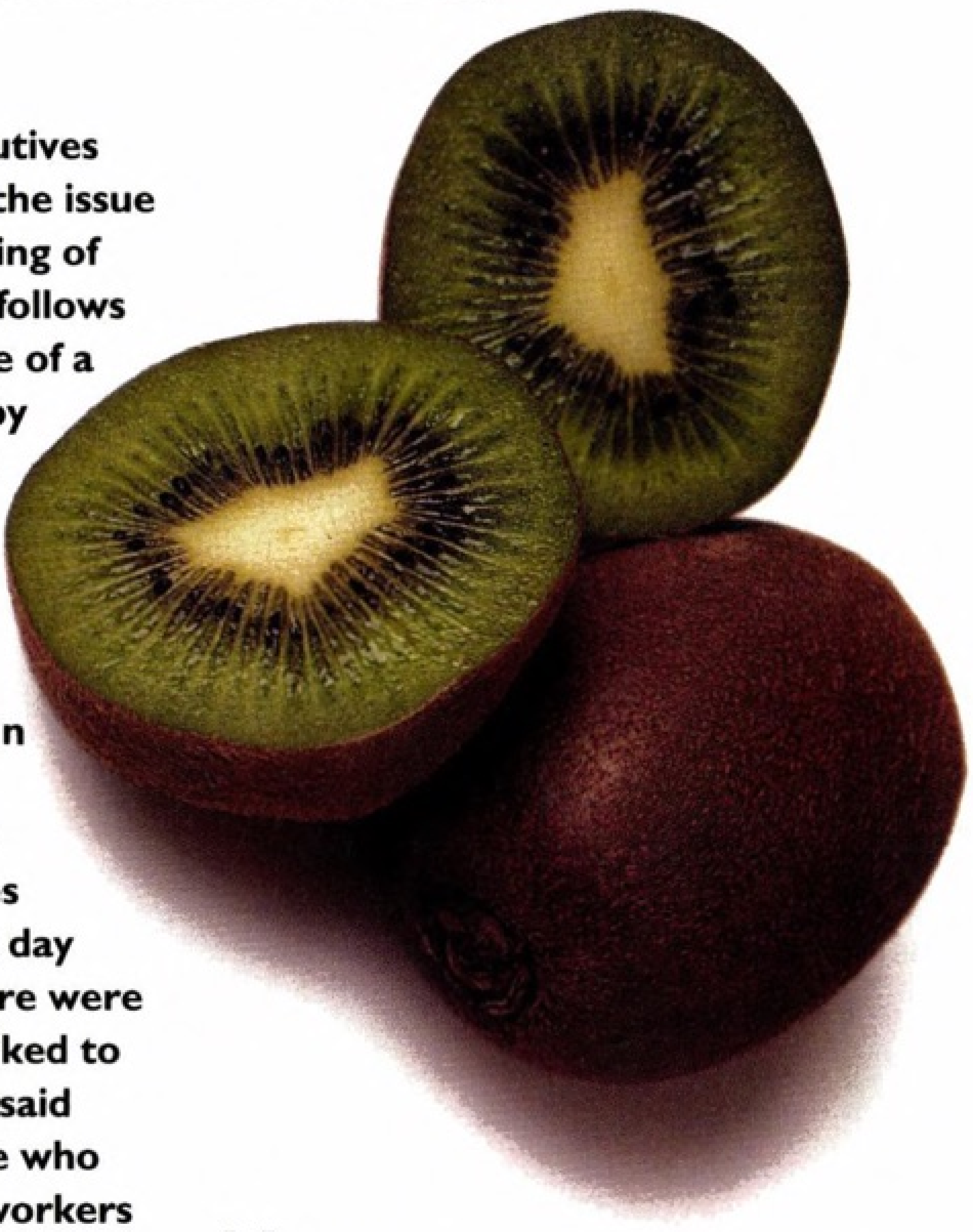
In Japan's first-ever referendum, residents of Maki, a community of 31,000 people in northern Niigata prefecture rejected a government-backed plan to build a nuclear-energy plant in the town. Although the outcome is not legally binding, the mayor has promised to abide by the wishes of the townspeople. Citizens groups are seeing this as a victory for 'real democracy' in Japan; the Government is less than happy.

Time, Vol 148 No 8

Over and out

One out of five intensive-care nurses in the US has intentionally hastened the death of a terminally ill patient without the knowledge of the patient's doctor. An overdose of painkillers was the most common method, while others were withheld treatment prescribed by the doctor. Most of the nurses, answering a questionnaire by David Asch of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, said that they made the decision because they felt the doctors were ignoring the wishes of the patients and their families.

Down to Earth, Vol 5 No 5



RICHARD OPEN / CAMERA PRESS

Name dropping

In the late 1980s Aotearoa / New Zealand producers dubbed the Chinese gooseberry the kiwifruit and created a taste sensation using this cuddly name. It succeeded, but perhaps a little too well. Other countries got in on the act, merrily using the name and the Aotearoa / New Zealand output shrunk to a quarter of the world market. Now the New Zealand Kiwifruit Marketing Board has decided what worked for them once could do it for them a second time. So they got hold of a British consultancy, Interbrand, to come up with a new name for the kiwifruit which they can register as a trademark. A survey showed Interbrand that people associated Aotearoa / New Zealand with cleanliness, greenness and sunshine and it was felt that a fresh, zesty, spirited name was needed. And they came up with one – Zespri.

The Economist Vol 340. No 7978

LANDMINES

Another gravy train

The money behind de-mining

In May delegates to the United Nations conference in Geneva examining the Inhumane Weapons Convention failed to agree a ban on landmines. In the end there was little to show for three years of preparations beyond the British Government having further advanced their own agenda for the use of more 'smart' (self-neutralizing) mines.

A UN publication stated in July that 'What was agreed in Geneva is a watered-down compromise with limited new restrictions on the use of landmines but no prohibition on any of these weapons in the short or intermediate term ...' However, the conference did seem to be agreed on the need to prioritize the clearance of the 110 million mines strewn across the world that cause some 70 casualties each day.

Since the conference commercial companies have been keen to provide the mechanized answer to mine clearance. The resulting number of meetings on the subject have seen a number of past mine-makers and -layers suddenly reappearing as de-miners. In some cases the companies concerned are still involved with landmine technology and so are able to cross-fertilize one operation with information gained from another.

At a recent UN-hosted conference in Copenhagen on 'mine clearance' a number of dubious experts presented papers. A veteran of the UN operation in Cambodia, Canadian Georges Focsaneanu presented a paper on 'mechanical mine clearance'. Mr Focsaneanu is now in the employ of Schiebel, Austria, one of the world's largest distributors of mine-detecting technology.

NIC DUNLOP / CAMERA PRESS

The star turn was undoubtedly the South African Doctor Vernon Joynt who presented a paper on the detection of 'hard-to-find mines'. Joynt is a veteran of the South African arms company Mechem and took a leading role in designing South African mines in the 1960s, working with the South African – and later the Rhodesian – armed forces, UNITA in Angola and Renamo in Mozambique.

Another 'expert' was Harry Hambric who has a 22-year military career in the US army and was able to claim three patents on equipment for mine detection and clearance.

The intention behind the Copenhagen conference and future UN events appears to be to cultivate a group of friendly 'de-mining experts' who can promote their own technology for mine clearance. Then, under the auspices of the UN, the experts and equipment will be standardized for worldwide use. In this way the UN can effectively patent the market in mine clearance and the funding for that work.

Why, one may wonder, should they want a ban on landmines when the clearance business is beginning to look so lucrative for those who can get their noses in the trough early enough?

Paul Donovan

Out of the blue

The newest idea to boost reforestation is to drop saplings, packed into dart-shaped containers, from aeroplanes. When the trees hit the ground, according to the theory, they will impale themselves in the soil and take root. The idea is the brainchild of Moshe Alamaro and Nicholas Patrick, a pair of aeronautical engineers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

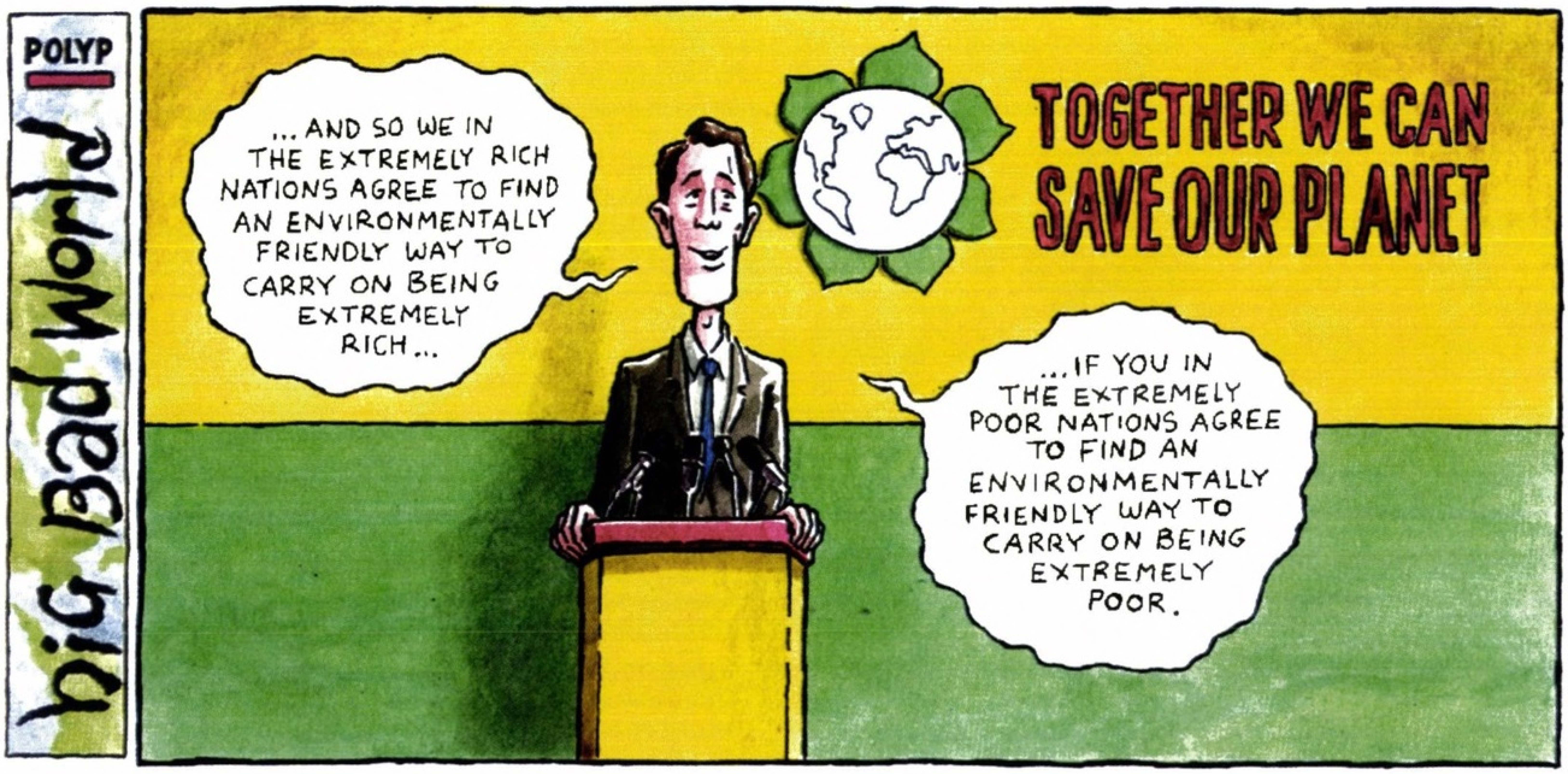
Their design for the plant container is such that it should reach a velocity of 300 kilometres per hour when dropped from a sufficient height, which is fast enough for it to plant itself deeply in the ground without scattering the soil around. They recognize the need to clear the ground in advance.

The Economist, Vol 340 No 7976

A handful of dust

The cash-strapped museum of Worcester, England, is attempting to make money by selling dust gathered from its exhibits – which include the teeth of King John – for £1 a bag.

The Economist, Vol 3440 No 7976


POLYP
big Bad World
...AND SO WE IN THE EXTREMELY RICH NATIONS AGREE TO FIND AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY WAY TO CARRY ON BEING EXTREMELY RICH...
TOGETHER WE CAN SAVE OUR PLANET
...IF YOU IN THE EXTREMELY POOR NATIONS AGREE TO FIND AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY WAY TO CARRY ON BEING EXTREMELY POOR.

Update

GENDER

Iron Ladies

Transvestite team wraps up Thai volleyball

THE Iron Ladies are going through their usual ritual to prepare for their next volleyball game. Team members slip fuchsia shorts and shirts over their slim hips and flat chests, touch up their mascara and lipstick and tie back flowing black hair.

One player places a manicured hand on hip and jokes: 'We accept anyone on the team as long as they are pretty. We like to distract the referees.'

The Iron Ladies are not in fact ladies, or even women. They are transvestites who form the best male volleyball team in Thailand. To the surprise of many and the disgust of some, they recently defeated a team of national players and won the country's top amateur volleyball prize, causing a huge stir in sporting circles about whether it is appropriate for transvestites to represent the country.

Most team members played for amateur clubs around the country until they formed the Iron Ladies four years ago. Their first priority is the game, which in Thailand ranks second in popularity only to soccer; their second priority, they say, is to show that transvestites are people and can play as well as – if not better than – anyone else.

'We can't make this statement as individuals, but maybe we can as an international team,' says 24-year-old Danupol Nuengchang, the team's founder. Since being crowned the top team in the country, they have appeared on talk shows, been featured in newspapers, drawn more fans to their games and may have lured a top Thai pharmaceutical company as a sponsor.

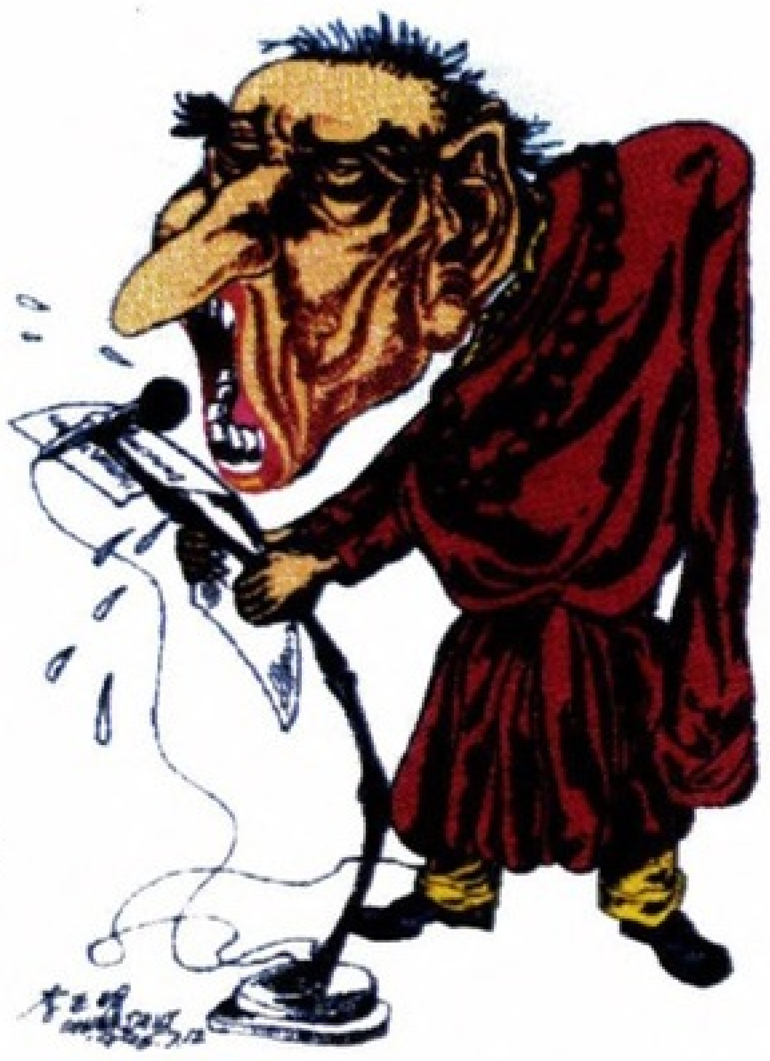
A spokesperson for the Thai Olympic Committee says there is no reason why members of the Iron Ladies should be prevented from representing the country in future. 'We have nothing against transvestites or queers [sic] or whatever,' says Danny Kirdsiri. 'But it's the first time we have ever seen a team like this one. Everyone likes them because they are guys trying to look pretty and act in a feminine way.'

Transvestites, called *katoeys* in Thai, are largely tolerated by most citizens. It is not unusual to be served in a major department store, bank or government office by someone wearing trousers and a tie but with beautifully manicured nails and full make up. One member of the Iron Ladies is a teacher; another a civil servant. Also on the team are four non-transvestite players who have adjusted well to the team spirit.

Sue Montgomery / Gemini

SUE MONTGOMERY

False images



Chinese authorities have been on the warpath in the campaign to ban pictures of the Dalai Lama in Tibet which began in November 1994. Recently in Ganden monastery, 40 kilometres east of Lhasa, 86 monks were arrested following the discovery of photographs of the Dalai Lama. Meanwhile China seemed happy enough to violate its own ban by publishing this caricature of the Dalai Lama (which bears no resemblance presumably because the cartoonist didn't have a proper photograph to go on) in the *China Daily* while accusing him of using human body parts as sacrificial offerings. The irony of such an allegation from a government which has executed more than 1,000 people since May of this year in an anti-crime campaign is particularly pointed.

The Chinese authorities are obviously hoping that if they throw enough mud some of it will stick. Yet daily they are being challenged over their own excesses. They have admitted for the first time to holding Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. China's Ambassador Wu told the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child: 'He has been put under the protection of the government at the request of his parents. The boy was at risk of being kidnapped by Tibetan separatists and his security has been threatened.' If this were really the case why was China so eager to foist Gyaltsen Norbu as a substitute Panchen Lama? In fact a new law has been passed in Tibet which permits the security personnel to arrest, beat and take whatever 'appropriate measures' against those who don't support the Chinese Panchen Lama.

***Update Free Tibet Campaign*, No 1 / *Tibetan Bulletin* July-August / *Far Eastern Economic Review* Vol 159, No 33**

Grim milestone

Michael Blackman, a 26-year-old native Australian, was recently found hanging from a bedsheet in a Queensland detention centre. He became the hundredth native Australian to die in custody since May 1989, when a Royal Commission into the problem completed a nine-year study. Despite years of effort and the expenditure of millions of dollars to try to improve things, the yearly death toll has been climbing steadily. Aboriginals are ten times as likely as whites to die in custody and whereas they comprise less than 2 per cent of Australia's population, they account for 24 per cent of deaths in custody.

Jim McKenzie / Gemini

Simple solution

After a long search for a firefighting chemical that does not destroy the ozone layer, the Norwegian Fire Research Laboratory at Trondheim has come to the conclusion that fine sprays of water will do the trick nicely. Most fire extinguishers still use halons which are 100 times more destructive of the ozone layer than the chlorine from CFCs. Even though the Trondheim Laboratory's results are impressive, chemical firms are still looking for artificial substitutes for halons, because no-one can make much money out of selling water.

New Scientist, Vol 151 No 2039

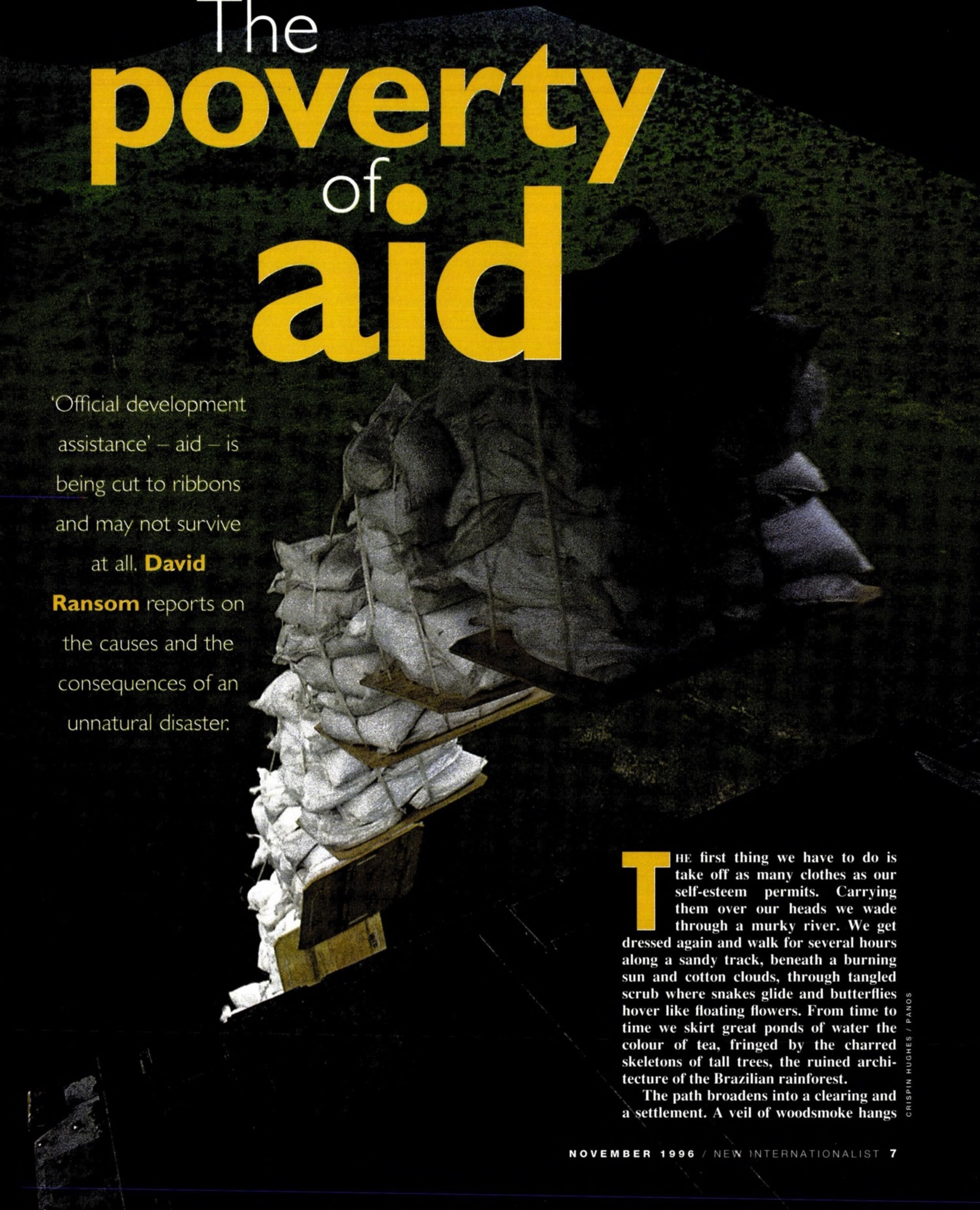
Quote

'Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment.'

Gandhi

The poverty of aid

'Official development assistance' – aid – is being cut to ribbons and may not survive at all. **David Ransom** reports on the causes and the consequences of an unnatural disaster.



CRISPIN HUGHES / PANOS

THE first thing we have to do is take off as many clothes as our self-esteem permits. Carrying them over our heads we wade through a murky river. We get dressed again and walk for several hours along a sandy track, beneath a burning sun and cotton clouds, through tangled scrub where snakes glide and butterflies hover like floating flowers. From time to time we skirt great ponds of water the colour of tea, fringed by the charred skeletons of tall trees, the ruined architecture of the Brazilian rainforest.

The path broadens into a clearing and a settlement. A veil of woodsmoke hangs over palm-thatched huts. Pigs and chickens scamper across the bare earth. Around the settlement are cultivated fields and tall plantations of *babassu* oil palms. Slowly people emerge from the deep shade of their homes to greet us. A life of extreme frugality gives to them a kind of grace possessed only by those who are left with little else. So little that I cannot see anything of value that remains to be taken from them.

What I saw was her poverty – what she saw was the poverty of the aid we were able to offer

Gunmen come here nonetheless, trying to evict them from the land they have salvaged from the wreckage of the rainforest. The gunmen are sent by someone far away (former President Sarney of Brazil) who is not to be trifled with, laying claim as he does to feudal estates the size of a small country, and knowing as he must that the price of ownership is constant vigilance.

As we are shown around the settlement – named 'The Criminal' for reasons no-one is quite sure of – it is obvious how much is missing. There is one hut for a 'school' but there are no teachers or books; another for a 'clinic' but no doctors or medicines. There is oil from the *babassu* but only the most laborious means of getting it to market, on foot along the path we followed and then another 20 kilometres along the side of a road to the nearest small town. With us are people who have come to see what, if any, aid can be offered them. The urge to help is overwhelming.

Eventually, 'the criminals' – as they call themselves with bitter irony – gather to bid us farewell. Some of them huddle round a portable radio. They are listening to the BBC World Service in Portuguese – it is, they say, the only radio station they are able to find. The date is 16 January 1991 and the bombs have just begun to fall on Iraq: the Gulf War is underway. Marinilza, a young woman, turns to us and – only partly in jest – says:

'The best thing you could do to help us, you know, would be to drop those bombs on the *fazendeiros*, the landowners of Brazil, not the poor people of Iraq. The real crime is for this land to be wasted. All we need is for the gunmen to go away. We want to be left in peace. Then we could solve our own problems.'

Unsure of what I can do to stop the gunmen or the Gulf War, I am at a loss for words.

'Never mind,' she continues with a smile. 'At least you have listened to us. Maybe you will understand. That is the most important thing.'

And I know she is right. Her poverty would not exist – at least not in its present form – were it not for the gunmen. Poverty itself might not exist if poor people were not treated in this way.

How can 'aid' change that? What I saw was her poverty. What she saw was the poverty of the aid we were able to offer – its inability to tackle the root causes of her anger and bring about permanent change for the better.

There was a time when aid – in large quantities and specifically targeted – did make a difference. For 40 years after World War Two, 'official development assistance' (ODA) formed part of an international regime that, by extension from the post-War reconstruction of Europe to the world at large, saw the global levels of infant mortality, life expectancy, literacy, almost every measurable index of human well-being, improve slowly but surely.

But in the countries of the South, the poverty of aid soon became apparent. The devastation left by colonialism was of a different order altogether from the legacy of war in the North. There were so few traces left of what had been destroyed, so little understanding of what it would look like if it were restored. All the models were made in the North.

Much of the poverty in these countries was – and still is – absolute poverty. This means the absence of 'basic needs' like food, drinking water, shelter, education or healthcare. Both absolute and *relative* poverty (the gap between rich and poor)

Aspects of aid: registering for assistance in Uganda (below); food aid tumbling into the wilderness in southern Sudan (previous page).

COMITE INTERNATIONAL GENEVE

L DE TOLEDO / ICRC

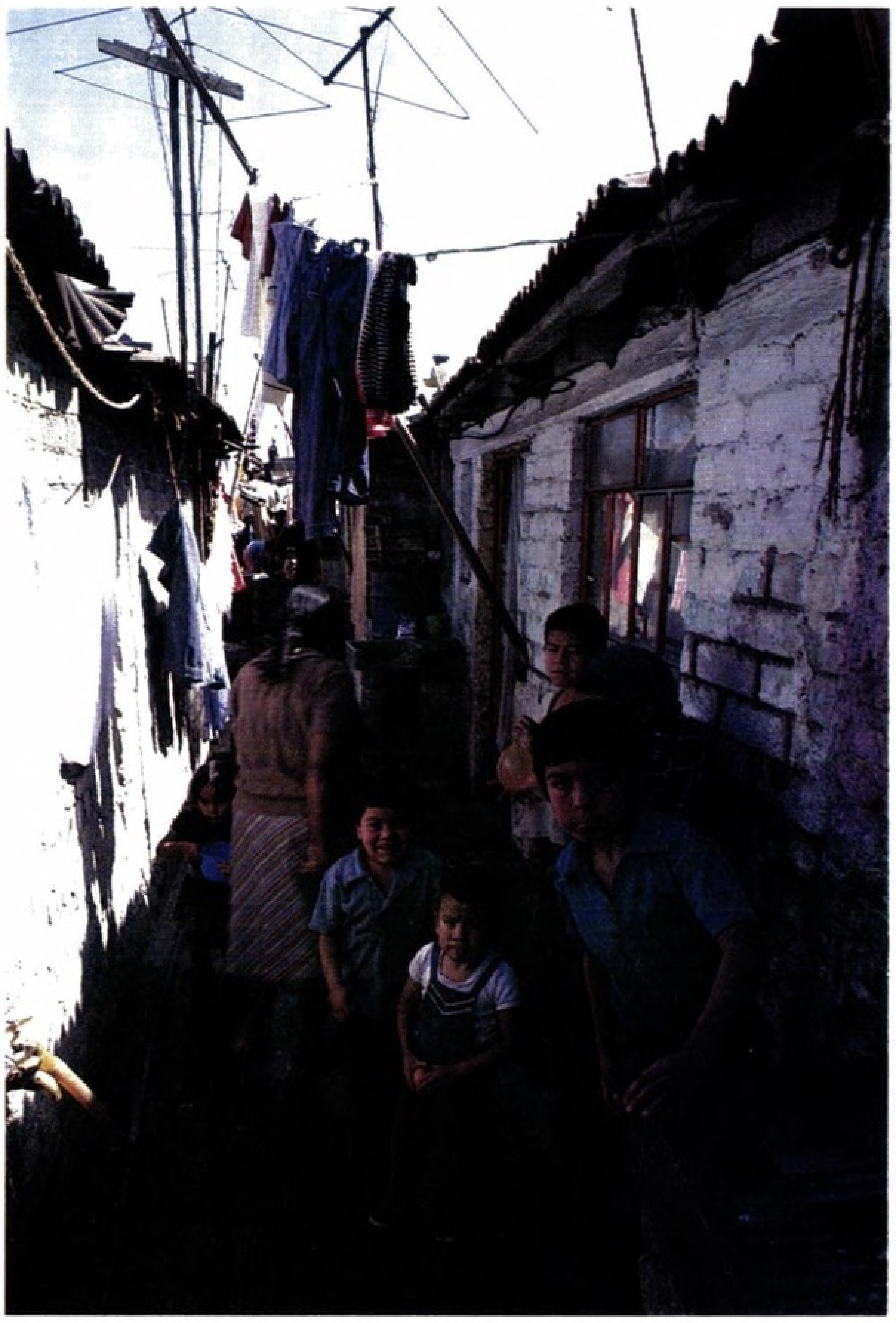
have been increasing everywhere, North and South, for the past 15 years. Between 1965 and 1980, 200 million people saw their incomes fall. In the years between 1980 and 1993 the figure rose to more than a billion. The people of Ghana, Haiti, Liberia, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Sudan, Venezuela, Zaire and Zambia are poorer now than they were in 1960. In sub-Saharan Africa enrolments in primary education have fallen by as much as half.[1] Diseases of poverty like tuberculosis and malaria, once thought 'conquered', are returning to haunt us with renewed vigour. In Mexico, tortillas are turning green – the colour of a dye applied to animal feed to prevent its use for human consumption.[2]

Meanwhile 'official development assistance' – aid – from rich to poor governments has fallen for the fifth year in succession, and in 1995 reached its lowest level ever.[3] So low, in fact, that serious questions are now being asked about whether it can, or should, survive at all.

Charitable endeavour isn't faring much better. Everywhere foreign-aid agencies are in crisis, finding it harder and harder to raise funds. Anxious aid workers catch themselves fighting back the surreptitious desire for the next big disaster to come as quickly as possible and fill up their collecting tins once more. The total cash they raise is, in any event, less than a tenth of official aid. And most of these agencies get a large chunk of their funds from official aid anyway.[4]

It might be supposed that the increase in poverty is a direct result of the drop in aid. So, the argument goes, increase aid and poverty will decrease. Unfortunately it doesn't work this way. Less than a quarter of the $59 billion ODA total ever reaches poor people – equivalent to about eight US dollars per head per year.[5] ODA is siphoned off to remote 'development' objectives and mega-projects, 'tied' to purchases from donor countries or paid in 'debt relief' straight to Northern banks. Most poor people never get to see a single cent of it. And the changes that are being made to aid are making the problem worse rather than better. In this, the UN International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, the meagre public provision of education and healthcare upon which poor people depended in Latin America is being replaced by even more meagre 'Social Investment Funds', often financed by foreign aid and charging fees for services that are scattered more or less at random, wherever political patronage or the threat of social unrest dictate.[6]

The final and possibly fatal folly is that the remains of ODA have now been 'tied' in their entirety to 'structural adjustment programmes' (SAPs). SAPs require privatization, cuts in public expenditure, increases in exports and absolute adherence to the principles of 'free' markets and 'free' trade. These principles are, by definition, indifferent to the eradication of poverty: they are largely responsible for its creation. So, for good measure, 'good governance' has been added to the lengthening list of aid 'conditionalities' to ensure that they are properly enforced. Not only do poor people get less money, they have to spend more time and effort explaining why they need it – as if it weren't obvious in the first place.


BARRY LEWIS / NETWORK

The price of 'structural adjustment' in Mexico: 80 per cent live below the poverty line.

One may question the morality of using aid to blackmail people thought to be powerless. One may question the sanity of *public* institutions like the World Bank and the foreign-aid 'business' promoting *private* enterprise. But what is truly alarming is that SAPs don't actually work. In fact, they're threatening to become the world's worst-ever unnatural disaster.

The whole sorry saga began as it meant to go on, with a 'crisis'. In 1982 Mexico threatened to default on its debts. It was not the only 'Third World' country in a similar position. For a time a financial fiasco threatened to engulf the world's private banks, whose foolish but hitherto lucrative loans had created the problem. The US Government panicked and cobbled together a 'Brady Plan' that imposed the first major SAPs on Mexico as a condition for rescheduling the debts.

The crisis seemed to pass. Real wages in Mexico halved overnight because the Mexican people were having to pay for the debts, but billionaires sprouted like beanstalks. Mexico was being hailed as a shining model of what 'adjustment' could do. By 1994 it was, apparently, ready to move at long last from South to North and join the US and Canada in the North American Free Trade Agreement.

But then, whoopsy daisy! Within a few months came another 'crisis', and the world's financial system faced melt-down once more. So another quick fix was arranged with public funds: in fact, $38 billion in all from the US Government, in exchange for another round of SAPs and the gift of assets like the Mexican oil industry. With a few months of *this* deal, the number of Mexicans living on five US dollars a day (the local 'poverty line') or less had doubled, from 40 to 80 per cent of the population. 'It is not a package to aid the Mexican people,' comments Carlos Heredia of Equipo Pueblo, 'nor the Mexican economy. It's a package to bolster the failing policies implemented in our country for the last 15 years, and to prop up the regime.'[7]

Less than a quarter of the $59 billion ODA total ever reaches poor people – equivalent to about eight US dollars per head per year

By a poignant coincidence, that $38 billion – considerably less than is still spent on tobacco every year in the US – would have amply funded the $34 billion that is needed to provide safe water, sanitation, primary education, healthcare and family planning to *all* of the world's poorest people.[8]

What, then, is to be done? Well, since SAPs-style 'development' and the eradication of poverty are now mutually exclusive, a choice has to be made. If aid is to survive it must be made to adhere to the humanitarian principles – with the eradication of poverty as its principal objective – that are the only possible justification for its continued existence. That has to be the democratic task and responsibility of the people of the North.

> ***So, is official aid worth saving at all? For the majority of the world's poor people in the South, the answer is 'probably not'***

The fatal flaw in ODA is that, by hitching up to SAPs, it has become breathtakingly prescriptive and actively anti-democratic. Such evidence as we have suggests, on the other hand, that the greatest 'impact' on poverty is made by poor people themselves confronting the 'deep structures', the inequities of ownership, economic power and human rights, that lie behind it.[9] This makes poverty a political issue. And during the past 15 years one of the most positive things to have happened in the South is the flowering of popular movements everywhere to tackle these 'deep structures'.

During the 1980s and 1990s there has been an astonishing growth of such movements in the South, many of them supported in a modest way by their Northern counterparts. Nobody knows exactly how many of them there now are. The number registered with the Government of Nepal rose from 220 in 1990 to 1,210 in 1993; in Bolivia from around 100 in 1980 to 530 in 1992; in Tunisia from 1,886 in 1988 to 5,186 in 1991.[10]

The best of them have played a crucial part in widening the democratic 'space' available to the people of the South. They have ventured into difficult and dangerous 'political' territory. 'There is a deep, burning anger,' says Mari Marcel Thekaekara of her experience in rural India. 'Illiterate farmers know that poverty cannot be eradicated by aid which cripples. They have perceived the inherent threat. They have started to get angry and to act.' Popular movements have begun to make the one 'adjustment' that counts – to the 'deep structures' of poverty. We have a unique opportunity to support them. The least they deserve is solidarity from the rest of us. The next chance to show it will be at the World Food Summit in Rome between 13 and 17 November.

As Svante Sandberg of Forum Syd (a co-ordinating group) in Sweden suggests, there are mutual benefits to be gained from solidarity. 'Swedish popular movements are in need – in some cases rather a drastic one – of renewal,' he says. 'They are looking to external examples. And this time they find their sister organizations in the South offering new ideas. After all these years, it seems that the learning process is finally getting through from South to North. Thanks to a crisis of identity for the Swedish movements, there is a possibility of something rare in the history of development co-operation: real reciprocity, an interchange between organizations and people in the North and the South.'[11]

Official aid as it stands does nothing to support this 'interchange'. So, is it worth saving at all? For the majority of the world's poor people in the South, who have never seen any evidence that it exists, the answer is probably not.

But then, it is impossible to live unaided. We come to each other's aid because we cannot help ourselves – because disasters keep happening and because we also drop bombs on each other. And, interestingly enough, the countries who give the most aid – Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands – are also those who treat their own citizens best.

Who knows, maybe one day I'll be stripping down again and heading off in search of Marinilza, and by this time the gunmen will have disappeared, the bombs will have stopped falling on Iraq and we'll both be able to look back without anger. Until then Marinilza and her people – along with countless others the world over – are getting on with their lives themselves. ■

PRIVATIZASYON
CHOMAJ
LA VICHÈ
NOU
NON
P VANN

'No to privatization, unemployment…' in Haiti. Popular movements still need refreshment and solidarity.

REGNAULT / LIAISON

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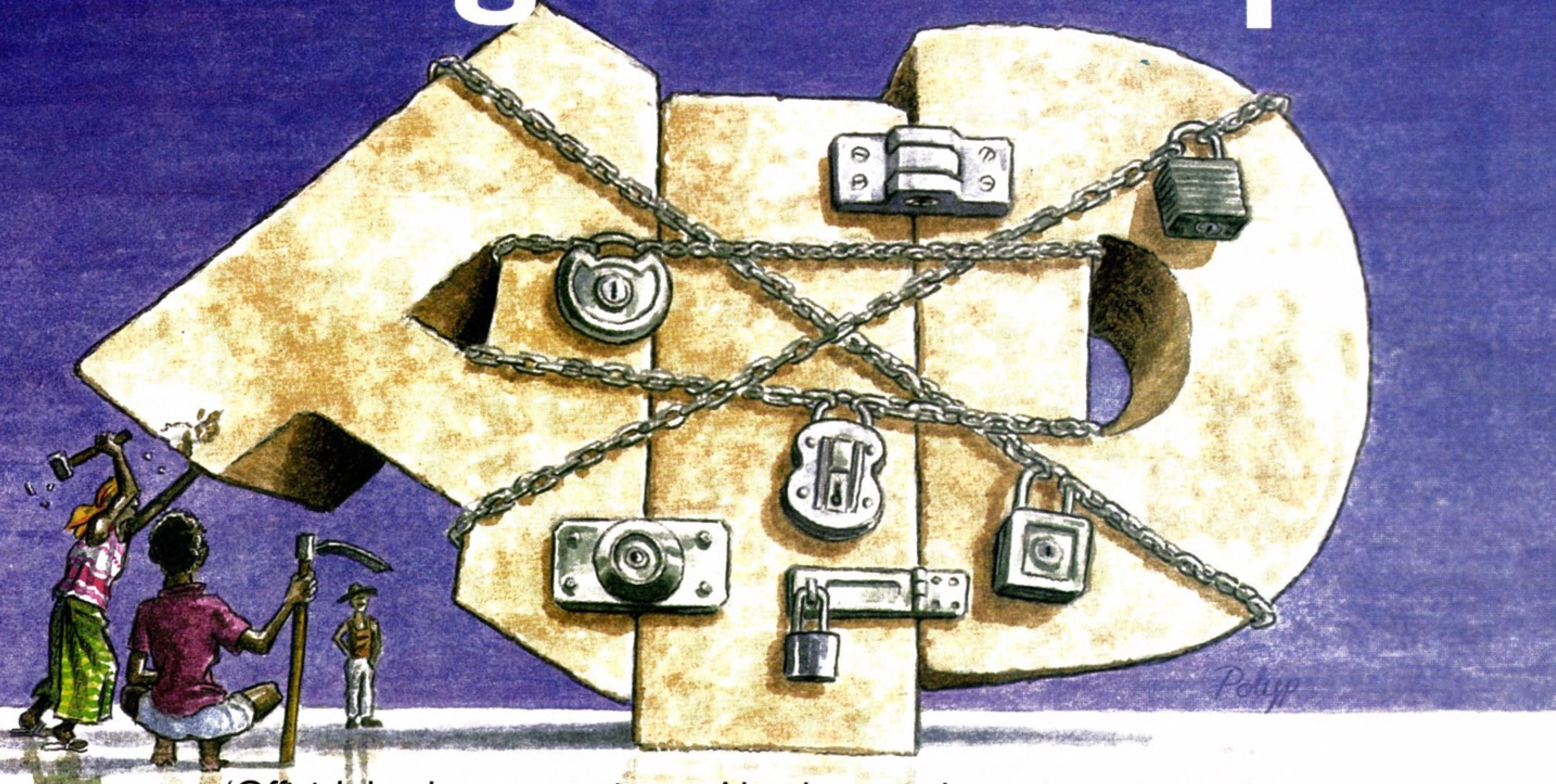
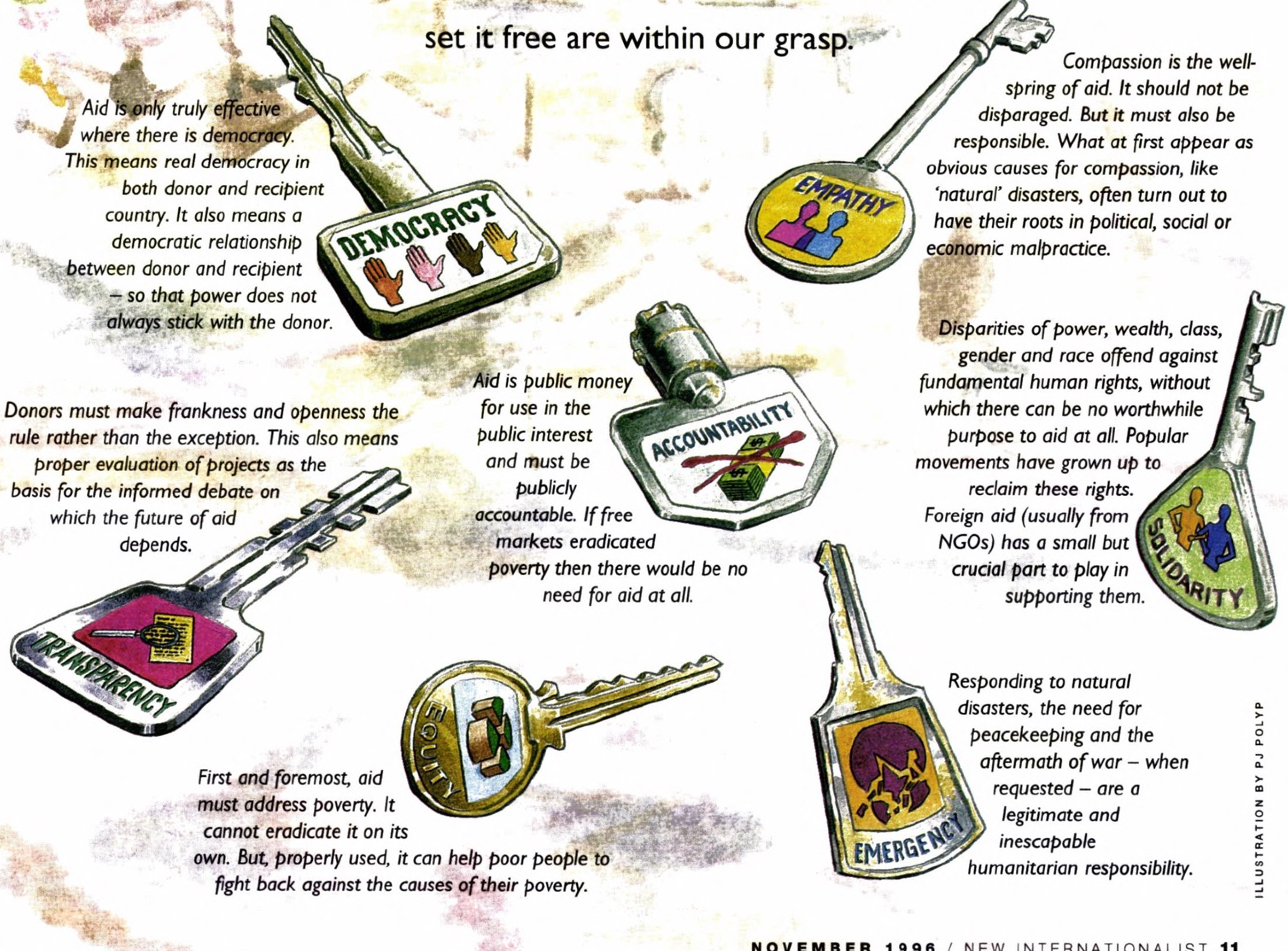
1 *Human Development Report 1996*, UNDP, OUP. **2** John Ross, *Bloodshed after protesting health workers shed their blood*, GN34514, Gemini News Service, London. **3** OECD News Release, 11 June 1996: provisional figures only. **4** *NGOs and official donors*, ODI Briefing Paper 1995(4), London. **5** Personal communication with Sir Hans Singer, University of Sussex. **6** *Report on the Americas*, NACLA, May/June 1995. **7** Personal communication with Carlos Heredia in Tampico, Mexico. **8** *The Reality of Aid 1996*, Earthscan, London. **9** Roger Riddell, Anthony Bebbington, Lennart Peck, *Promoting development by proxy: the development impact of government support to Swedish NGOs*, ODI monograph, London 1995. **10** Michael Edwards and David Hulme (eds), *Beyond the Magic Bullet*, Earthscan, London, 1995. **11** Paper prepared for *New Internationalist*.

The great escape



'Official development assistance' has been tied to private enterprise. It's in need of liberation – and the keys that could set it free are within our grasp.



Aid is only truly effective where there is democracy. This means real democracy in both donor and recipient country. It also means a democratic relationship between donor and recipient – so that power does not always stick with the donor.

Compassion is the well-spring of aid. It should not be disparaged. But it must also be responsible. What at first appear as obvious causes for compassion, like 'natural' disasters, often turn out to have their roots in political, social or economic malpractice.

Donors must make frankness and openness the rule rather than the exception. This also means proper evaluation of projects as the basis for the informed debate on which the future of aid depends.

Aid is public money for use in the public interest and must be publicly accountable. If free markets eradicated poverty then there would be no need for aid at all.

Disparities of power, wealth, class, gender and race offend against fundamental human rights, without which there can be no worthwhile purpose to aid at all. Popular movements have grown up to reclaim these rights. Foreign aid (usually from NGOs) has a small but crucial part to play in supporting them.

First and foremost, aid must address poverty. It cannot eradicate it on its own. But, properly used, it can help poor people to fight back against the causes of their poverty.

Responding to natural disasters, the need for peacekeeping and the aftermath of war – when requested – are a legitimate and inescapable humanitarian responsibility.

ILLUSTRATION BY PJ POLYP

MIKE GOLDWATER / NETWORK

Republic of the landless

SOLIDARITY

Popular movements in the South frequently have to face the 'deep structures' of poverty on their own. The best kind of aid shows solidarity with them.

Carlos Tautz reports on a movement of the dispossessed in Brazil that believes you can only travel far if you use your own feet.

On 15 May this year 50 rural workers processed proudly with their tractors through the streets of Teodoro Sampaio, a town in the Brazilian interior. They were showing the people of the town the first industrial products of their newly-established agricultural co-operative. It is the most recent of 59 demos organized so far by the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST).

The MST was created in 1984 by a coalition of Catholic liberation theologians, land-reform groups and rural workers' unions. Twelve years later it is active in 24 of the 28 Brazilian states and has become an immovable object in the path of the free-market economic policies of the Brazilian Government. It has challenged the face of political power in Brazil by placing the urgent need for agrarian reform at the very centre of the country's political agenda.

Brazil has one of the greatest concentrations of land ownership anywhere in the world: the richest 10 per cent of the population own 52 per cent of the agricultural land. According to surveys by the MST, there are 1,457 estates in Brazil larger than 10,000 hectares, totalling 65 million hectares in all – enough to accommodate more than 3 million families. There are about 4.8 million landless families – 20 million people.

The MST has already improved the conditions of some 150,000 squatter families. Today almost all of them have a better standard of living than the majority of small farmers in Brazil. Research conducted during the 1980s by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN found that squatter families had an income almost double that of other small rural producers. Their levels of education and life expectancy were also much higher.

Within the MST there are currently 44,000 families – 220,000 people. Organized by the Movement, they occupy land which they hope to settle permanently. Otherwise these families will simply be swallowed up by the big cities.

'This issue is of concern to society as a whole,' says Gilmar Mauro, a farmer and one of the 17 national co-ordinators of the MST. According to public-opinion polls taken in 1996, he is right. They show that on average at least 70 per cent of Brazilians support land reform.

The largest mass movement in the country, the MST gets 80 per cent of its funding in small amounts from each of its member co-operatives; 15 per cent comes from local progressive organizations and trade unions. Unlike other large social movements in Brazil, it receives less than five per cent of its budget from foreign-aid agencies. Almost all the foreign aid it does receive is devoted to political education.

'We believe you can only travel far if you use your own feet. Aid is welcome, but only to help our own organization,' says Mauro. 'We are critical of some forms of co-operation, which do not help at all.'

For him, international solidarity shown at crucial moments in the fight for land has been much more important than money. When the Brazilian President, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, visited France in June this year he was surprised by public protests about the massacre of 19 rural workers in Brazil on 17 April. The massacre took place in the state of Pará, where the police and private militias worked together and, under the command of a colonel in the Military Police, killed workers who were demonstrating peacefully. The protest in France demanded the punishment of those responsible, who remain at liberty to this day. 'That's the kind of solidarity we like – solidarity that strengthens friendship between peoples at moments of difficulty,' says Mauro emphatically.

Meanwhile, more expressions of international solidarity are being organized by rural workers in the rest of Latin America and around the world. The MST is a member of Via Campesina – a worldwide network of small farmers – and the Latin American Co-ordinating Group of Rural Organizations.

Foreign aid is a comparatively small part of its budget because the MST has a clearly defined view of the state. 'The Brazilian state has a lot of money and an obligation to guarantee investment in health, education and other basic services,' says Mauro. 'We don't just want land. We also require schools, hospitals and roads to carry our products. This role can only be undertaken by the Brazilian state. Any purely economic assistance from foreign-aid agencies is a palliative for specific situations and doesn't help to resolve the crucial question, which is the concentration of power in Brazil.'

The political line taken by the MST has aroused the antagonism of Brazil's rulers and landowners. Time and again the MST has been accused of having links with guerrilla organizations in Latin America, like Sendero Luminoso ('Shining Path') in Peru or the Zapatistas in Mexico. But the Movement is armed only with its organization and an inclination to fight for agrarian reform that has taken many sectors of Brazilian society by surprise.

'Purely economic assistance from foreign-aid agencies doesn't resolve the crucial question – the concentration of power in Brazil'

'This link with the guerrillas is a fiction dreamed up as much by the Left as by the Right,' says Mauro. 'The Left imagines we can form an army like the Zapatistas and the Right is looking for an excuse to repress us. If the MST had taken the military option it would no longer exist. We have the support of society, and we've put land reform on the agenda. I think we can offer a better example to the Latin American guerrilla organizations than they can offer us.'

The future plans of the MST are ambitious. It aims to settle up to 25,000 families permanently on the most fertile land in Brazil, in the region known as Pontal or Paranapanema. This is where the richest of all Brazilian landowners installed themselves in the middle of the last century. By falsifying land titles and expelling rural workers, they built their fame, fortune and power in Pontal, which today has almost 15,000 people camped on roadside verges. It is here that the MST has founded what is already being dubbed the 'MST Republic'.

The squatters first aim to occupy almost 100 hectares of uncultivated land that now belongs to the state government. Then, says the leadership, the target is unproductive land on the large private estates. The preparations for a mass occupation have already begun. The landless have contracted five agronomists to help them to organize their settlements. 'Pontal will be a focus for the development of family farming. We're going to invest in subsistence agriculture, but we want access to the best technology to achieve development and provide small farmers with the conditions for economic growth,' says Gilmar Mauro.

Gradually, landless people are also achieving more political power in the ten municipalities in the region. Many militants stood for election as local councillors and prefects in the municipal elections of 3 October. Almost all of them were candidates for the Workers Party (PT), with which the MST has a friendly but independent relationship.

The MST has three basic commitments: to fight for land, for agrarian reform and for social transformation. Putting them into practice has involved not just people who are landless but the whole of society as active participants in change. The settlement of these people has, says the MST, proved that land reform is viable, even in Brazil. And it will enable millions of rural Brazilians to be freed from extreme poverty – without recourse to charity. ■

Carlos Tautz (tautz@ax.apc.org) is a freelance journalist based in Rio de Janeiro who works for several foreign magazines. He usually covers social and environmental issues.

Rural workers protest throughout the country: land invasion in Utumuju, Bahia (opposite page) and celebrating success in Parana (below).

MENTO DOS TRABALHADORES RURAIS SEM TERRA

MIKE GOLDWATER / NETWORK

TRANSPARENCY

It's tempting to sanctify aid and stifle the open discussion it needs to survive.

Does aid

ALEX DE WAAL

No, but

Aid is essentially a Western, Anglo-Saxon model of charitable endeavour that's being imposed on the rest of the world. It goes back to Elizabethan times when Queen Elizabeth's Privy Councillors – wise, cynical souls that they were – saw the dissolution of the monasteries as creating unrest, even famine. They realized that the best way to keep a lid on unrest is to promote charitable endeavour. The truth of that insight echoes down the centuries, reinforced by the 1961 court judgement on Amnesty International which said: 'Justice is political, justice is not charitable. Amnesty cannot be a charity.'

The reality is that if you look at major problems – such as civil war and famine – around the world, the way they are solved is not through charitable action, it's through political action. The more resources – financial, political and intellectual – that are put into the charitable/technical model, the more the political discourse withers on the vine.

What's happening is that international law is being rewritten by the UN Security Council to take any element of criminality or moral deviance out of famine and invert it, so that the only moral issue is: Are Médecins sans Frontières or Oxfam allowed to operate? Which of course is completely beside the point. What we need to do is put back culpability and guilt – up to and including criminal guilt – into these situations, which is an act of solidarity with the victims. There are all sorts of public, transparent processes to go through to find out who's guilty, who's innocent, who behaved heroically, what mechanical procedures were at fault. In provincial India, if there's a massive food shortage, Members of Parliament or senior civil servants lose their jobs. If there's a famine in Africa international civil servants get promoted.

'Major problems are solved not through charitable action, but through political action'

***Alex de Waal** works for African Rights.*

HOPE CHIGUDU

Not much

Aid is decreasing and perhaps it does not matter, if one considers the way it is used. I don't think it is effective in terms of reaching the poor. All I do know is that very, very few people benefit from it. The poor remain poor.

If aid ended, life would still go on. It would only change for the people who benefit from aid. They are driven in huge cars and without it they would be forced to ride bicycles and would definitely lose weight.

Resources benefit those people who are better placed to exploit them. Who, in the first place, negotiates aid? Who defines what are considered the 'development needs' of a country? People in powerful positions also happen to be men, and it is not always true to say that they represent the poor. Some have lived in positions of power so long that they have forgotten what it means to be poor. There are many people who are getting poorer despite aid, and because of aid. It is as if there is some kind of strategic silence about the fate of the extremely poor: 'Let them pull their socks up! If they do not have any, let them borrow from the non-governmental organizations!'

'If aid ended, life would still go on'

Take the example of aid and the conditions that are imposed before it is given, like democracy and human rights in the receiving country. What is meant by democracy? Who defines it? To most people 'democracy' means one man, one vote. The man who casts that one vote is as much a tyrant at home with his family as the one he votes for. Both are in their sixties. Are they going to learn democratic values in the afternoon of their lives? No. Democracy starts at home and in other institutions such as schools and churches. Yet when one raises issues of the family, gender relations, patriarchy, one is told that these are 'cultural' issues. We are talking about power relations here. Where does 'culture' come in?

Poor people should be able to have a say. In fact they have said many times over that they know what their problems are. They want food, schools, hospitals. But beyond that they want to build a strong, democratic society.

***Hope Chigudu** works for the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, Harare.*

NAILA KABEER

Sometimes

A lot of us who were very much for aid as a tool for development have become a bit disillusioned about how effectively it has been used.

Along with the move to private enterprise, it is non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which have been identified as healthy, rather than the state. Everyone is very critical of the Government of India, say, for its failure to deliver effectively to the poorest of the poor, to low-caste people and to women. The reason they are so critical is because it has been documented – it's out there in the public domain, it's published. When we come to NGO evaluation – nothing. Absolutely nothing!

'We would like a world where aid was limited to humanitarian crisis'

'Gender' has served a lot of these organizations in the same way as 'empowerment' and 'participation', as a trendy label. Women, as long as they suffer from gender subordination, are not going to be a politically volatile category to work with. 'You need people to do free community healthcare for you? Right! We'll get the women. You need people to plant trees for you for free? We'll get the women.'

We do not want aid to be an accepted feature of North/South relationships into the indefinite future. We would like a world where aid is limited to humanitarian crisis, conflict situations, rather than an integral aspect of development. Because aid does breed dependency, it is always on the terms of the giver. But if you were to pull aid out of Africa or Bangladesh completely tomorrow, I don't know if anyone on the Left would be prepared to take on the responsibility for what might happen. The Left got it wrong because they forgot that issues around basic needs don't take care of themselves in very poor countries.

***Naila Kabeer** has written extensively on gender and development and is a Fellow of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.*

matter?

North and South, all agree there's a crisis – but the diagnoses differ widely. **David Ransom** samples opinion.

CHARLES ABUGRE

Maybe

Aid that builds, that is responsive to national processes, enhances local, collective and democratic processes. Aid – sitting where I am sitting – is more than a supplement. It is the bulk of our resources. It is the thing that determines how economies evolve, how policies nationally are made.

Changes in the global system have suddenly abandoned the processes that created support for Africans. During the past 15 years, as Africa remained a candidate for aid, there was nonetheless a massive outflow of capital from the continent; there is still a massive outflow of capital. Commitments were made between Africa and the rest of the world to undertake economic restructuring. In exchange our so-called global partners undertook to resolve the debt problem and reduce net transfers. That didn't happen. Those promises were not kept.

'What is the use of aid if it is counter-balanced by capital flight?'

It would be a sad thing to put the blame on aid, despite the callousness of transnational companies who have influenced aid policies in their own interests. We'd be backing the wrong horse if we put too much weight on the idea that aid has failed Africa.

***Charles Abugre** works for the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC) in Accra, Ghana and, with Yao Graham, is also head of Third World Network, Africa.*

HANS SINGER

Yes, but

The secret of development is now seen in prudent fiscal and monetary policies, control of inflation and increasing savings. A lot is left to the market. This is known as the 'Washington Consensus'. But while such liberalization may raise world income as a whole it creates greater inequalities, both between and within countries. The World Bank and the IMF are very worried about these inequalities and the way Africa, for instance, is left out.

'Aid will only work if it is a genuine contract.'

Aid will only work if it is a genuine contract, with obligations on both donors and recipients. What happens is that the countries do not accept the structural-adjustment programme that the World Bank or the IMF imposes on them, but they say they agree with it in order to get the money. At the first occasion they drop the programme, or it breaks down – it may have been unrealistic from the beginning.

Just think of it. You have a three-week IMF or World Bank mission consisting of monetary macro-economists from Washington, most of them with a PhD from Chicago. The group goes into a country that they know nothing about for three weeks and they sit together with people from the Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance, who are also monetary macro-economists – in fact many of them will have been former staff members of the IMF and World Bank. The real economy of the country is not represented at all. There's nobody there who looks after the interests of agriculture or industry. There's not much discussion of social problems, of employment, of income distribution and no data on poverty. It is, to my mind, a very unsatisfactory way of evolving these programmes.

Five or six years ago I was pretty desperate about the kind of thing I've been saying today. Everything was in vain. But now I'm much more hopeful again. The drawbacks of the 'Washington Consensus' are much more visible now, and more widely accepted.

***Sir Hans Singer** was present at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 and is now Emeritus Professor at the University of Sussex.*

MICHAEL TAYLOR

Yes

Christian Aid still has to take very seriously our relationship with lots and lots of very local communities across the world. Whilst they ask us to stand by them and support them I think we must do our best to do so. When I talk about 'walking on two legs' that's one of them. The other is campaigning on the structures that seem to go on maintaining and indeed creating poverty. There's been a considerable shift in this direction in the last few years. But we mustn't just shout to fulfil our own needs. We must ask: 'Is this really making a difference?' I think, in some cases, it is.

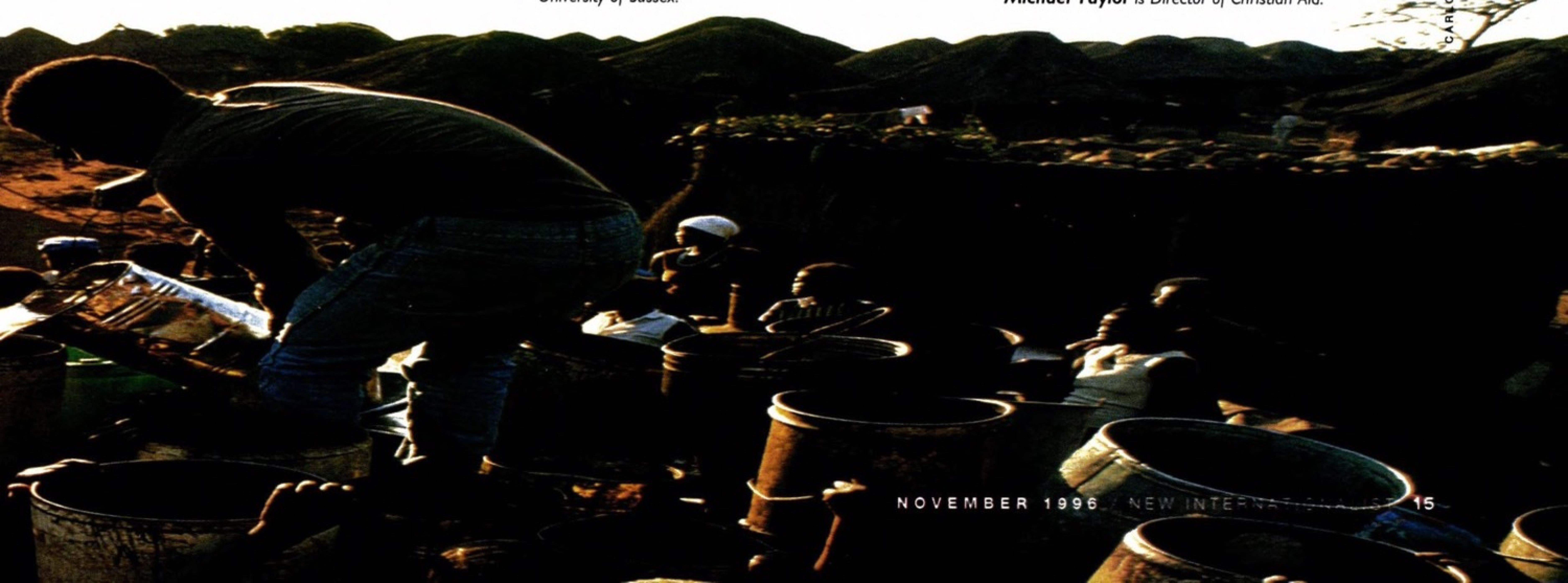
As a Christian who fulminates against religious fundamentalists I have a right to fulminate against economic fundamentalists. Questioning the economic order seems to be out for them – they really do have a passionate or fundamentalist faith in it. But the evidence grows that structural-adjustment programmes – not least in Africa – are not working, and that despite or because of this economic system poverty persists.

'We must ask: is this really making a difference?'

We used to think that the problem was in the South and the resources for tackling it were in the North. We now have to accept that the problem is everywhere. We have to create instruments – international, global, lobbying, research, policy networks – where the North and the South work together. Of course, sitting here as Christian Aid, one thing I'm very concerned to do is to maximize the huge potential of the churches network around the world.

If people see governments cutting aid, at the very least they should be asking loud questions. Are you cutting it because you think the reality of world poverty is less than it was? Are you cutting it because you think governments of the Western world don't have responsibilities towards the poor? What is your alternative strategy? Is it really a better way of fulfilling your responsibilities – and ours as part of the people you govern – towards the poor of the world?

***Michael Taylor** is Director of Christian Aid.*



CARLOS GUARITA / REPORTAGE / STILL PICTURES

Though aid may be a huge and complex 'industry' its function is to respond to moral imperatives. If we forget the humanitarian impulse, we quickly lose sight of the objective.

Mea culpa run riot

Maggie Black crosses swords with the 'developmenteers'.

On the terrace of an old tea-planter's bungalow in Kampala, I had one of those conversations about aid which sticks in the mind, and in the gullet, for a long time after. This was a few years ago and I was looking at the impact of AIDS on family life in Africa – at that stage in the epidemic, a phenomenon barely yet noticed.

I had spent a day in the company of a remarkable Irish Sister, Ursula Sharpe, and her team of Ugandan nurses and social workers. We had visited a rural school, where children orphaned by AIDS and their carers had congregated from all over the neighbourhood for a get-together and counselling. We had sung and danced in traditional African style, eaten a meal they had prepared, shared experiences in small groups and given out long bars of soap, blankets and school uniforms to the children. It had been both a gladdening and an intensely moving day, and I recounted it to a representative of a Scandinavian children's aid organization.

I was outraged by her reaction. She didn't approve of handing out bars of soap and blankets to the children. She unfairly latched on to the fact that the head of the programme was an expatriate Irish nun, who had in practice stayed as much in the background as possible. Oh, my friend said in tones of politically-correct superiority, we don't believe in hand-outs or charitable actions by white philanthropists. Outsiders with their old-fashioned ideas and irrelevant responses only succeed in disrupting local coping mechanisms.

In vain did I point out that Christian nuns were long part of the social landscape in Uganda and that not they but AIDS was the intruder. The traditional coping mechanism – the extended African family – was unable to cope with AIDS. That was the whole point.

Where, I asked in tones of fury in this delightful frangipani-scented setting, is the culture in which it is taboo to provide a gift to children who will otherwise shiver in the chill of night, who will otherwise have no clothes to wear to school?

Here, it seemed to me, was an example of the absurd extremes to which aid and development theorists can take the thesis that humanitarian assistance is highly deficient. It is damned every which way, even by those whose programme resources and professional careers depend on fundraising policies which deliberately capitalize on human compassion.

In this exercise, *mea culpa* runs riot. Humanitarian aid is motivationally suspect, ascribed to paternalism, surrogate power mania or middle-class guilt. Its impact is suspect: it creates a dependency culture and destroys coping mechanisms. Its unsustainability is suspect; resources spent this way are poured wastefully into a 'bottomless pit'. It is also attacked for maintaining inequities and postponing the glorious birth of the socialist state – although that song is less frequently sung these days. And in the contagion of conflict which at present characterizes the new world order, it is even fashionable to accuse humanitarian aid of prolonging wars. Soon someone will accuse it of starting one.

Where have such distortions come from and why do intelligent people believe them?

Leaving aside the Marxist critique and the mea culpaists, I put the blame squarely on the developmenteers. It is they, with their desire to be doing something more macho and important with their aid than mere philanthropy, who made the word 'humanitarian' into something soft, suspect and passé. They implied that aid provided under the humanitarian banner was an inferior affair, carried on by naive do-gooders who cannot see past the brims of their solar topees or the cuffs of their sisterly habits.

By the developmenteers, I mean those campaigners who took up the cudgels some decades back on behalf of the ex-colonial world and declared war on its hunger and poverty. Before they came on the scene, overseas charity was directed at refugees, the disaster-stricken and the afflicted and indigent in places where there were no social safety-nets. Its motivation was internationalist: an extension of the notion of assisting the helpless and needy to embrace the whole family of humankind.

But then came the era of 'development'. Resources and technology from the rich

MAGGIE BLACK

Soap from Sister Ursula: but taboo for 'development'.

countries were to be transferred to the poor via 'aid' in a Marshall Plan-type effort to enable them to 'catch up'. This was not charity: it was something much grander. It was about economic growth, social justice, terms of trade, the welfare state writ large. It was not about helping leprosy sufferers, orphans, the halt, the blind and the lame.

The developmenteers were very keen on a Chinese proverb which encapsulated what they were about: 'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him to fish and you feed him for life.' How simplistic can you get? Why did anyone think he didn't know how to fish already? It was much more likely that fish stocks were exhausted or the river polluted; that other fishermen with larger boats were stealing the catch; that someone else had claimed the waterways, or the market for cod had collapsed. It might actually have been better to feed the man for a while until the river was cleaned up and re-stocked or alternative jobs in manufacturing or service industries were created. Meanwhile, often as not, he accepted the idiotic fishing instruction and then took off for town.

Oh dear. So many misconceived projects with inconclusive, even negative, outcomes. So what is lambasted? There can't be anything wrong with development itself other than it needs a bit of re-defining. So it must be the mechanism – aid – which is at fault.

Having had a bad press from the developmenteers for a long time, humanitarian aid has recently enjoyed a renaissance. In 1984-85, the famine in Ethiopia – partly thanks to the television age – produced an outbreak of compassionate fever, stoked by Bob Geldof and Band-Aid. Almost all the major overseas aid charities, and a rash of new little ones, found their income soaring to unprecedented heights. Not for 'development', you notice, although this awkwardness was usually glossed over.

And although the emergencies of the late 1980s and 1990s tended to be murky affairs, their causes rooted in human rather than natural agents, their suffering caused by armed conflict rather than the weather, the flow of generosity was not impaired.

And it has been needed. Emergencies have recently multiplied and spread, becoming more brutal and sweeping whole populations into their maw. In Somalia, Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda; in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya; among Mexican Indians, Marsh Arabs and Kurds; and now in Burundi.

The new world disorder has placed immense strains on the machinery of international compassion. Because today's wars are no longer skirmishes within the framework of superpower confrontation, other countries do not expend resources keeping them under control. Often, the only response the Western world is willing to offer is a humanitarian response. Troops go in under a UN flag, not to fight but to deliver aid. Suddenly, humanitarian activity is not soft and do-gooding; it is deeply difficult, fraught with danger and political complexity.

There is nothing wrong with humanitarian aid... all I can say is, the more the better

It is also expensive, and it is siphoning away resources for that much more important thing – development. The amount of official development assistance allocated to humanitarian aid by OECD countries rose from less than $500 million in 1980 to more than $3,500 million in 1993.[1] Agencies which normally focus on development see increasing proportions of their funds haemorrhaging into 'the bottomless pit'. UNICEF expenditure on emergencies, for example, has gone up from ten per cent of its programme in the 1980s to more than twenty per cent in the 1990s.[2] This can't be helped, however much the developmenteers and efficiency wizards complain. Such organizations were invented to respond to humanity in distress. To ignore their worst hour of need would be a betrayal, and inexplicable to the donating public.

At the same time, in failed or limping economies of countries burdened by debt and structural adjustment, whatever fragile safety-nets were put in place in the modern era have been abruptly stripped away. Health and social-services budgets are shrinking. Classrooms are falling down. And charges for drugs and treatments are being introduced to avoid that dreadful blight, the dependency culture. Everywhere in the world, caring services are being turned over to the private sector. In many places in all kinds of countries, it is people like Ursula Sharpe and the Ugandan sisters who are trying desperately to plug the gap.

There is nothing wrong with humanitarian aid. And it is certainly not a second-class affair. When so many people in so many countries are enduring emergencies, upheavals, calamities, premature death from AIDS, and an indigence forced upon them by bad 'development', all I can say is the more humanitarian aid the better. If some of it goes for longer-term and rehabilitation purposes, I am sure nobody will object. If it helps to call such purposes 'developmental', then that's fine too.

Hardened development tourist as I am, occasionally something touches me deeply. I recently visited Ho Chi Minh City. On the banks of the Saigon River are families living in excruciating poverty. Their shacks jut out over the mud-banks on stilts, with the poorest and flimsiest far out in the stream, liable to be washed away. At the end of a hair-raising cat-walk I entered a one-room dwelling. The woman who lived there owned nothing except a bundle of rags. She had a daughter who had borne two children, one still a baby, from different men. This daughter had not been able to settle down. So she had gone, leaving her children with her mother, 'to try her fortune elsewhere'. Where this was, no-one knew.

Would it be OK, I asked the social workers I was with, if I gave the woman something? Yes it would. I turned my back to grope in my bag for a handful of dollars. When I turned round and gave them to her, the woman burst into tears. Upon which I also burst into tears. Across the gulf of culture, language and privilege, through the complexity of our several emotions, there was a momentary bond of complete human solidarity. When I left the community an hour later, she was waiting on the path dry-eyed, with the baby on her hip and a smile of mute farewell.

When I look back and think of that woman, I don't regret damaging her coping mechanism. What I regret is that I, and the world, didn't give her a great deal more. ■

Maggie Black is a writer on social development affairs. Her latest book, *Children First, the story of UNICEF past and present*, was published in August 1996 by Oxford University Press.

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[1] *Aid under Fire: relief and development in an unstable world*, UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, UN, Geneva, 1995. [2] John Richardson, Review of UNICEF's Emergency Relief Operations, UNICEF, New York, 1995.

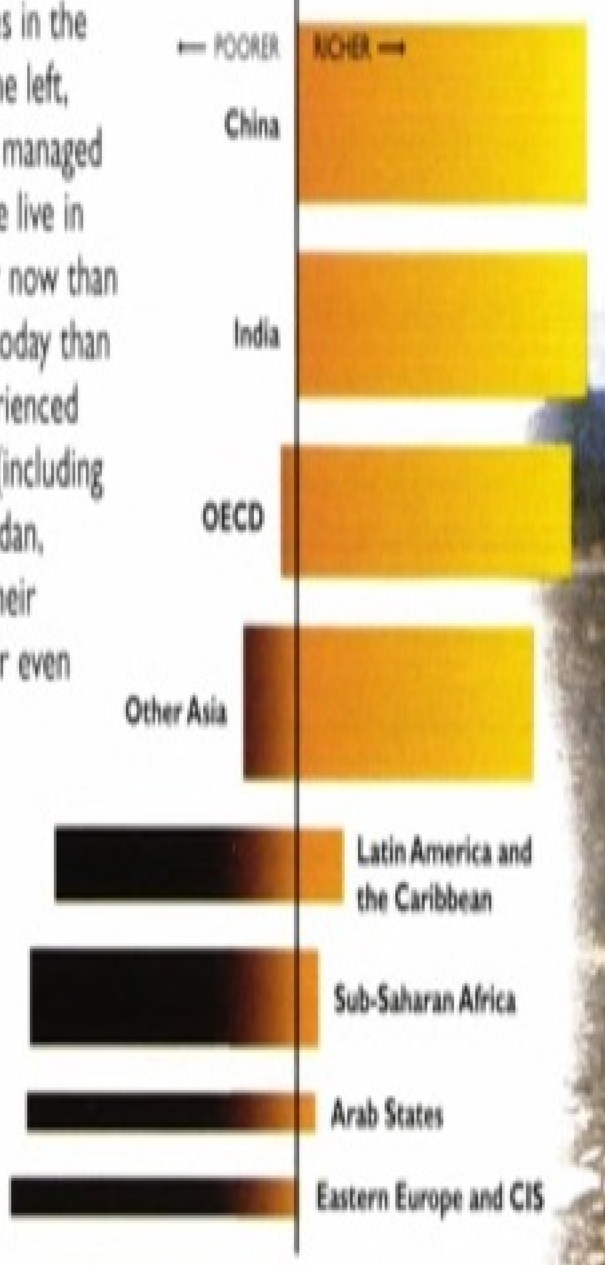
Aid - the facts

The point of aid is to tackle poverty. But it has failed to do so. Targets have been missed and promises have been broken – and now official aid is being cut back to the lowest level in 20 years.

Negative growth

The diagram shows the regional share of the world's population. To the right of the vertical line are the people of countries with incomes in the 1990s that are higher than ever before: to the left, lower than in previous decades. Aid has not managed to eradicate poverty: about 1.5 billion people live in about 100 countries that are actually poorer now than they used to be. They may even be poorer today than ever before in their history. They have experienced negative economic growth. Some countries (including Ghana, Haiti, Liberia, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Sudan, Venezuela, Zaire and Zambia) last reached their current income levels as long ago as 1960, or even earlier. Most of these countries are major recipients of aid.

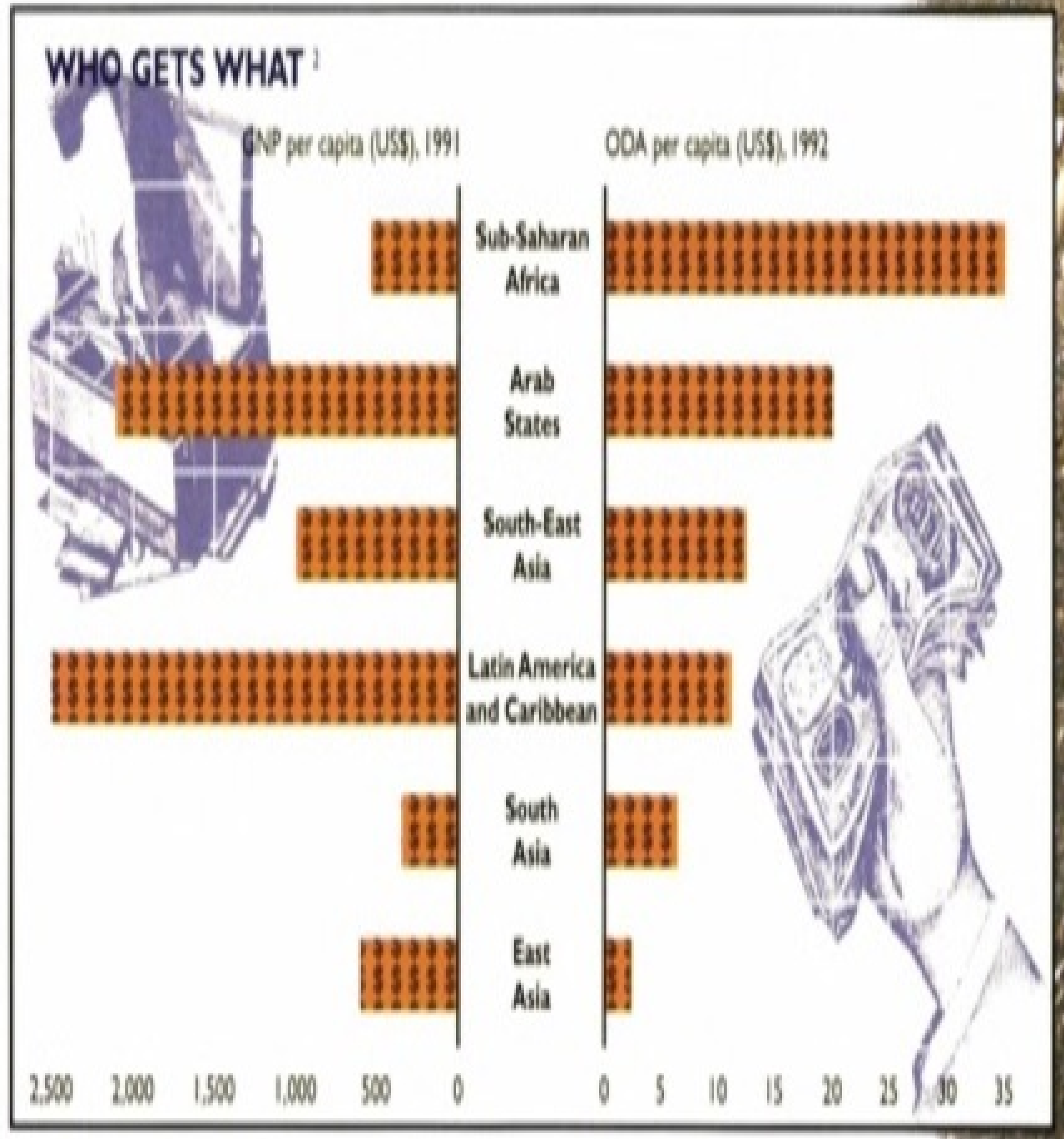
TOTAL POPULATION OF COUNTRIES THAT ARE RICHER, OR POORER, THAN THEY WERE BEFORE [1]



Bad shot

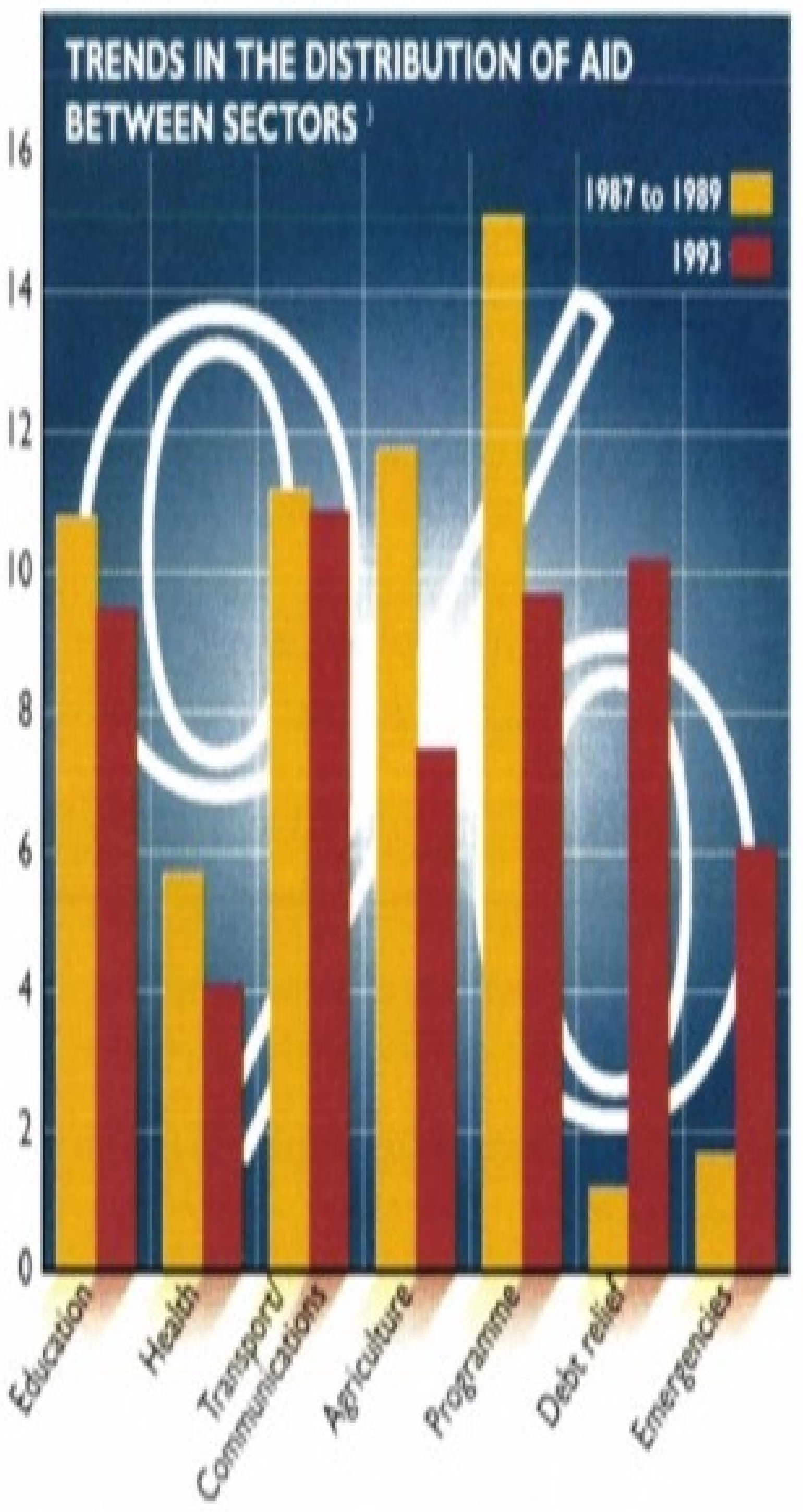
Most estimates suggest that less than 20% of aid ever reaches poor people directly. Two-thirds of the world's poor live in 10 countries that together receive less than a third of official development assistance. The Arab States have more than six times the per-capita income of South Asia, yet in 1992 (shortly after the Gulf War) they received more aid. Populations whose governments spent more than 4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on armaments in 1992 received more per-capita aid ($83) than those with military spending of less than 2% GDP ($32). The message is clear: aid is intended to serve the strategic and other interests of the donors and not to eradicate the poverty of recipients.

WHO GETS WHAT [2]



Moving target

TRENDS IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF AID BETWEEN SECTORS [1]



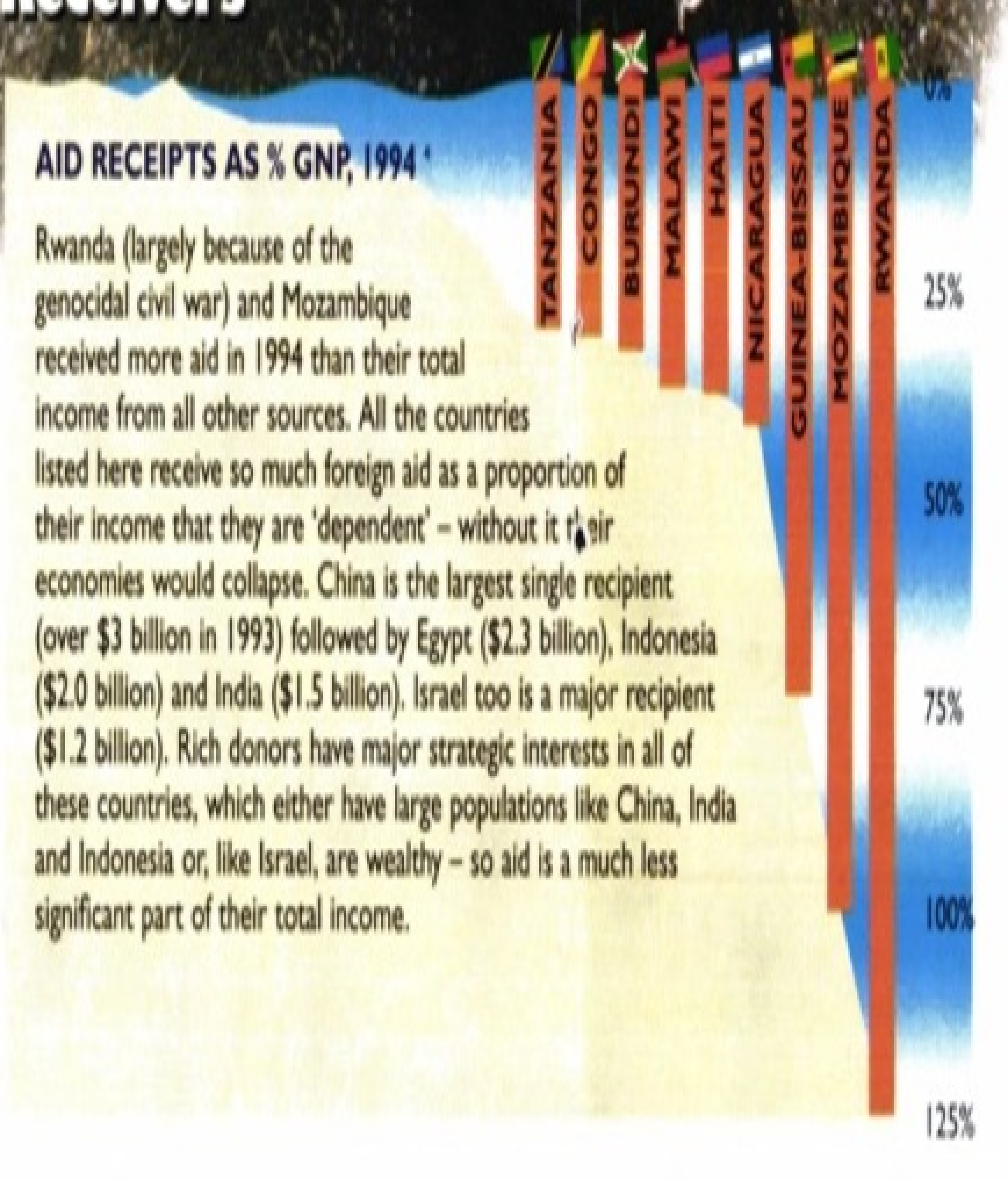
The chart shows how aid has shifted away from spending on health and education – the core tasks of poverty reduction – towards debt 'relief' and emergencies. In fact, overall, considerably more than half the total is not 'aid' at all, but returns to the donors in interest payments and purchases of goods and services.

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK
1990
CANADIAN TOUR

CARLOS GUARITA / REPORTAGE / STILL PICTURES

Receivers

AID RECEIPTS AS % GNP, 1994 [4]



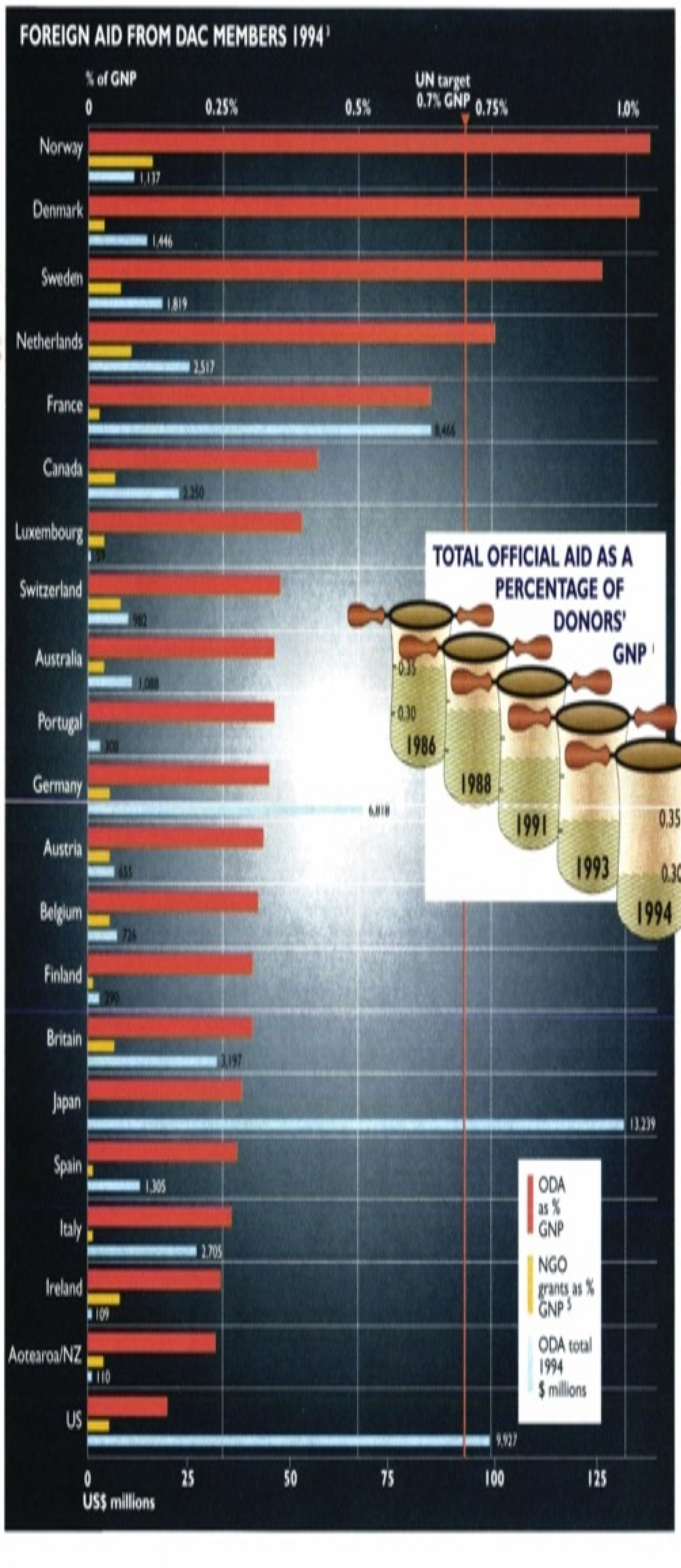
Rwanda (largely because of the genocidal civil war) and Mozambique received more aid in 1994 than their total income from all other sources. All the countries listed here receive so much foreign aid as a proportion of their income that they are 'dependent' – without it their economies would collapse. China is the largest single recipient (over $3 billion in 1993) followed by Egypt ($2.3 billion), Indonesia ($2.0 billion) and India ($1.5 billion). Israel too is a major recipient ($1.2 billion). Rich donors have major strategic interests in all of these countries, which either have large populations like China, India and Indonesia or, like Israel, are wealthy – so aid is a much less significant part of their total income.

Givers

Since 1969 DAC members (see Jargon Digester below) have repeatedly promised to give the UN target of 0.7% of their GNP in aid to poor countries. The promise was reaffirmed most recently at the Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995. But the 0.7% target has never been hit, or even grazed. In 1994 the average aid given by DAC members stood at 0.3% of GNP – less than half the target and the lowest level in 20 years. If rich governments stick to their current plans, it is certain to fall further. Only Norway, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands have ever reached the 0.7% of GNP target; the US gives the smallest percentage of its GNP of all donors. Japan is now by far the world's largest donor. At about $5 billion a year, aid given by charities is less than 10% of 'official' aid. It, too, has been declining in recent years: their grants to the South fell by 6.2% between 1992 and 1993.[5]

FOREIGN AID FROM DAC MEMBERS 1994 [3]

TOTAL OFFICIAL AID AS A PERCENTAGE OF DONORS' GNP [1]



The Jargon Digester

ODA = Overseas Development Assistance, or 'official' government aid. [4]

Aid: to qualify as such, ODA must come from governments, be intended for development purposes (thus excluding military aid), and be in the form of grants rather than commercial loans. Total ODA in 1994: $59 billion.[1]

Bilateral: grants negotiated directly between one national government and another. Proportion of total ODA in 1994: 69.8%.[1]

Multilateral: grants provided by international organizations such as the UN agencies and the World Bank. Proportion of total ODA in 1994: 22.2% (plus 8.0% from the European Union).[1]

Tied: grants given on the condition that they are spent on the purchase of goods from the donor. Proportion of ODA 100% 'tied' in 1994: 24.8%.[1]

DAC = Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, to which all major aid donors belong.

GNP = Gross National Product – A calculation of total national income, including money from abroad.

GDP = Gross Domestic Product, excludes earnings abroad.

HDI = Human Development Index – Prepared by the UN, this index uses figures on health, education and inequality as well as GNP per capita, to rank the world's nations.

OECD = Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – The 'club' of rich nations recently joined by Mexico and the Czech Republic.

NGOs = Non-governmental organizations – They range from large aid agencies to small charities and social movements in the South.

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1 UNDP, *Human Development Report 1996*. 2 UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*. 3 *The Reality of Aid 1996*, Earthscan, London. 4 World Bank, *World Development* 5 Kunibert Raffer and HW Singer, *The Foreign Aid Business*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 1996.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Aid has been drained of its ability to combat poverty, by being used for other purposes altogether.

Pulling the plug

Canadians have long been exemplary donors – the 'Scandinavians of North America'. **Mark Fried** watches as the Government changes course and aims to hit rock bottom.

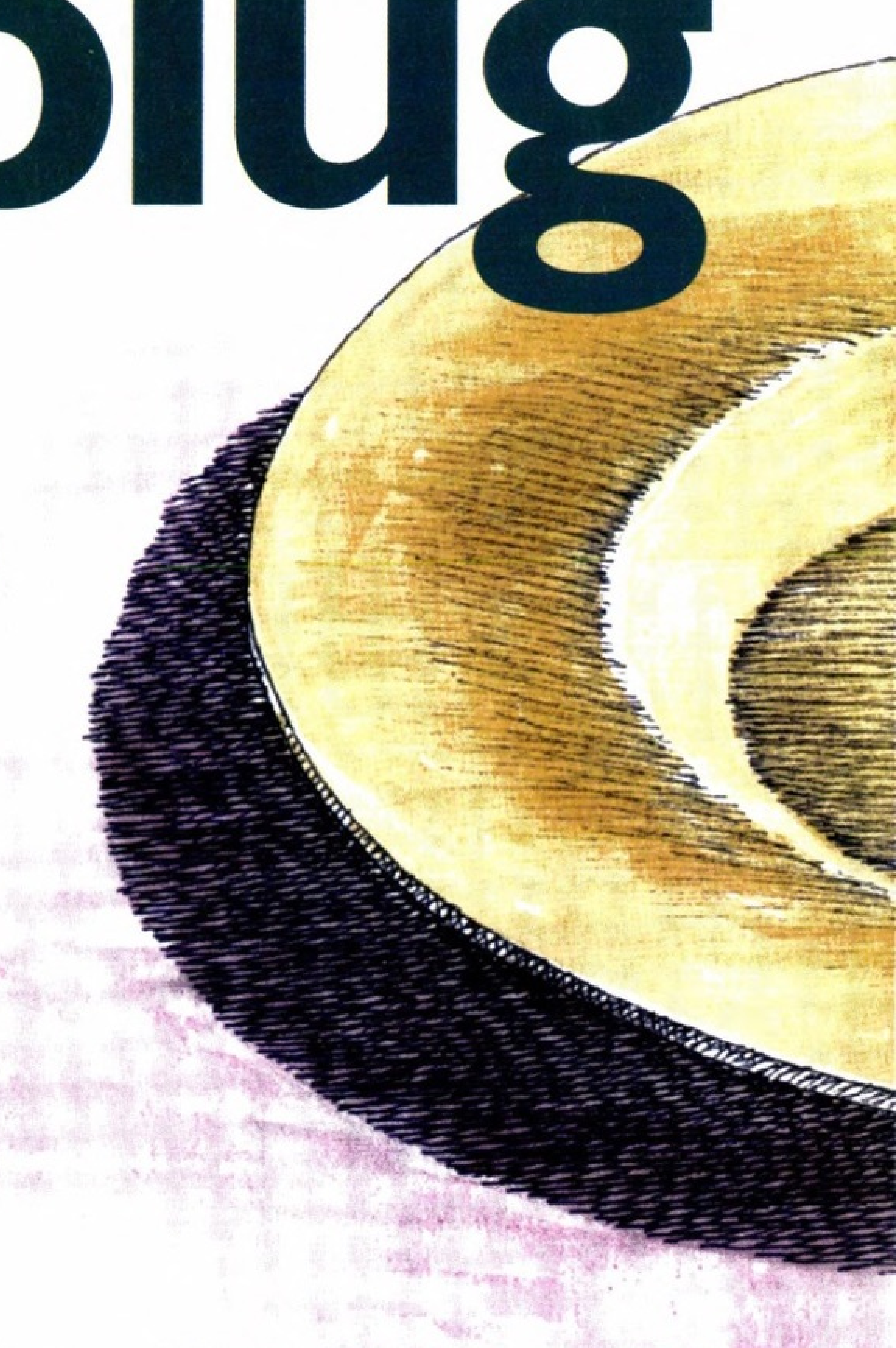


ILLUSTRATION BY VLADO PALANKOV

On 19 August last year, deep in Guyana's tropical rainforest, an earth dam collapsed at the Omai gold mine operated by a Canadian company, Cambior. Several hundred-million gallons of cyanide-laced water poured from a tailings pond into the mighty Essequibo River, the source of most of the country's drinking water and site of its principal fishery. It was Guyana's worst public-health disaster and one that was entirely predictable. In fact, Guyanese activists had predicted it five months earlier.

The Canadian High Commission in Georgetown was quick off the mark with a flurry of public-relations manoeuvres that included flying in government water-quality specialists from Ottawa. In Canada the story lasted two days before being relegated to the inside of the business pages. But in the sudden rush of attention, reporters uncovered a curious fact: the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) had picked up the tab for training Omai's workers.

Here is the sort of revealing detail journalists seek: precious aid dollars used to subsidize the profits of a predatory corporation. Promotion of mining technology is a key plank in Ottawa's export-oriented economic strategy; but why would Canada, with its enviable reputation as the enlightened 'Scandinavia of North America', be a party to such a venture?

Pierre Pettigrew shed some light on this question when he addressed parliamentarians for the first time on 13 June. Pettigrew is Canada's minister for international co-operation, a cabinet-level post created in January in a move that development workers hope will raise the profile of the aid portfolio. A long-time Liberal Party advisor plucked out of a Montreal investment firm, Pettigrew made an impassioned pitch for the generous internationalist spirit that has guided Canadian policy toward the developing world since 1969. That was the year Prime Minister Lester Pearson set the UN-sanctioned goal for wealthy countries of contributing 0.7 per cent of their GNP to development assistance.

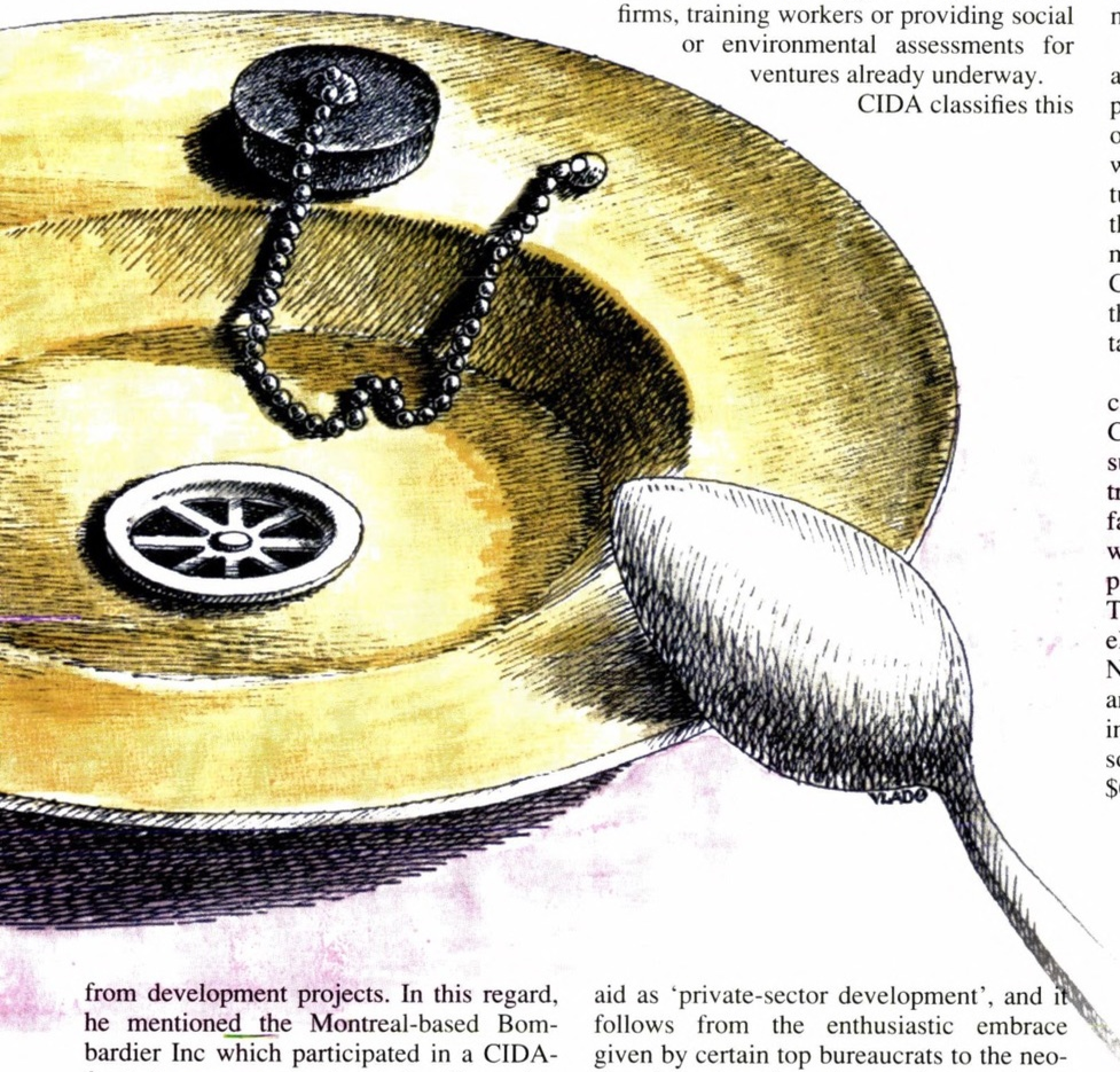
'Those of us who are turning inwards,' Pettigrew warned, 'who want Canada to stop helping others, forget that our prosperity depends on a stable international environment... The best way to jeopardize all that we have is to abandon the rest of the world to its fate.' Then came the line reporters were waiting for: aid would not be exempt from 'contributing to the Government's deficit-reduction efforts'. Over the coming two years, he said, CIDA would lose an additional 11.5 per cent from its budget, after suffering a 15.5 per cent cut in 1995. By 1998 total aid spending would be a full 45 per cent below the level of 1991. Pearson's 0.7-per-cent benchmark is receding so far into the distance it seems ludicrous: in 1998 Canada will contribute 0.24 per cent of GNP to development assistance, its puniest effort since 1965.

Pettigrew did not dwell on the numbers. He pointed to the improved economies of developing countries, improvements Canadian aid helped create – and the opportunities this presents for Canadian business. He echoed the Government's 1995 white paper, *Canada in the World*, which names 'the promotion of prosperity and employment' in Canada as the first objective for Canadian foreign policy, and justifies foreign assistance because 'it connects the Canadian economy to some of the fastest-growing markets of the world'.

Pettigrew praised the high percentage of Canadian aid spent in Canada – nearly 70 cents in the dollar – boasted that 85 per cent of this year's aid programmes will be delivered by private firms, and cited the profitable spin-offs for the private sector from development projects. In this regard, he mentioned the Montreal-based Bombardier Inc which participated in a CIDA-funded programme to train Romanian officials to privatize state enterprises, and then won a contract to sell aircraft to the privatized companies.

Business-promotion justifications for aid are a logical answer to attacks from the deficit hawks. But has the domestic justification taken on a life of its own? Looking at Guyana the answer seems as clear as the Essequibo River used to be. But once you dive below the surface, other facts complicate the picture. CIDA's grant to Cambior was just a tiny portion of its Guyana programme, which also funds the country's indigenous-rights organizations, including some of the very activists who predicted and denounced the mining disaster. Trade promotion may threaten to swamp other aid objectives, as some critics claim, but the story is far from simple.

Canada received kudos from aid workers when it reinstated official development assistance to Cuba in 1994, much to the chagrin of the United States. The first shipments to arrive in Havana consisted of desperately needed food, medicine and vitamins. In the two years since, however, nearly half of Canada's assistance has gone to Canadian companies seeking to do business on the island: paying for feasibility studies for ventures suggested by Canadian firms, training workers or providing social or environmental assessments for ventures already underway.



CIDA classifies this aid as 'private-sector development', and it follows from the enthusiastic embrace given by certain top bureaucrats to the neoliberal notion that the market ought to replace the state as the engine of development. Of CIDA's six broad goals, private-sector development received the largest share of the bilateral budget last year, while suffering the least in cuts. The other five are: basic human needs; human rights, good governance and democratic development; the participation of women; environmental sustainability; and public participation. Citing corporate Canada's expertise in rural electricity, energy and telecommunications, the Government also added a seventh goal – building infrastructure – despite CIDA's own conclusion that such projects rarely contribute to the reduction of poverty.

Certainly not all of CIDA's trade-promotion is as overt as the Romanian or Guyanese examples. Much of its efforts seek to create 'an enabling environment' for the private sector. For example, the modest bilateral package soon to be announced for Cuba will help design a new tax system and reform of the central bank to 'assist the transition to a market economy'. Similarly a portion of aid to South Africa, where Canadian business is anxious to make inroads, funds macro-economic policy development so the country can better meet the requirements of the international financial community.

Getting free-market policies right, these aid officials believe, will do more to relieve poverty than either funding social services or community-based production, even while, officially, CIDA is critical of structural-adjustment policies for the inequities they engender. That private-sector development also provides a helping hand to Canadian companies is simply evidence of the happy marriage of development assistance and business promotion.

The pro-business bent has other implications where the largest chunk of Canada's aid (41.3 per cent) is spent, in sub-Saharan Africa. Outside South Africa, trade potential is nil and countries risk falling off the map. Namibia for example was promised a five-year, $10 million package following independence in 1989. Two years later, when trade promotion was elevated to a key foreign-policy goal, Namibia was declared not to be a priority and the programme was axed. Only after intense lobbying by Canadian NGOs was some assistance reinstated, amounting to $0.5 million for 1997.

Though vocal and politically powerful,

A poisoned river: results of Canadian 'aid' in Guyana.

ROBIN PICTERS

market ideologues are still a minority at CIDA. The Government's pro-business drift has not stopped the Agency from adopting some of the world's most forward-looking development policies. Canada supports dynamic human-rights work in Indonesia, Guatemala, South Africa and elsewhere, programmes that challenge the status quo in ways unimaginable a few years back. All CIDA programmes are now required to include a gender analysis and strategy.

The Government has instructed CIDA to increase its spending on basic human needs to 25 per cent of the total budget. According to the independent North-South Institute, such spending now accounts for just over 10 per cent of the budget (CIDA claims 20 per cent), about half of which goes through Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The marketeers don't oppose such spending, but tend to view it as a safety net to prevent the inevitable negative consequences of market-led growth, rather than a catalyst in the development process. Scrambling to meet the 25-per-cent target, CIDA statisticians are counting the mushrooming category of emergency relief, which may alleviate suffering but is hardly a contribution to long-term development. Spending on disaster relief (now 9.1 per cent of the total aid budget, the third largest category) is rising not only because there are more disasters to attend to, but because it is readily saleable to the Canadian public. In addition, food and other emergency assistance can easily be tied to purchases in Canada; indeed food aid is nearly always 'tied' aid.

What threatens to denigrate Canada's assistance programme is less the size of the pie than the ideological drift of trade-crazed politicians and their counterparts in the aid bureaucracy. Most CIDA personnel are defensively focused on providing evidence of 'effectiveness' – a lot of evaluations of progress with little attention to the goals sought – leaving the battle over how to distribute the cuts to be fought out between the coterie that views the market as saviour, and the quieter but more numerous officials who favour an equilibrium between state, market and civil society.

By now the chemicals spilled in Guyana's rainforest have broken down or been absorbed into the food chain. Since Omai is the largest employer in Guyana, poisoning the river system did not prevent the mine from reopening a few months later with no change to the disastrous technology in use. Gold exports are again defraying the country's crushing debt load and several hundred people have steady work. Downstream from the mine, where villagers have no choice but to drink the water and eat the fish, the fallout from Canada's trade-promotion aid is only just beginning. ■

Mark Fried is a writer and translator living in Ottawa. His day job is at OXFAM-Canada.

Both eyes open

Manomi Suzuki explains why the Japanese people must watch what the world's largest donor gets up to.

FIVE years ago Japan overtook the US to become the world's largest aid donor. It has a self-imposed target of $75 billion dollars to be given in aid between 1993 and 1997. But economic recession, shaking the structural basis of Japan's post-war economy, means that the target will probably be missed.

Japan's aid is based on *youseishugi,* which means 'responding to requests from recipients'. But in many cases these 'requests' come from Japanese companies and institutions in close collaboration with powerful bureaucrats, politicians and business people in the aid-receiving countries.

Last year the Fair Trade Commission ruled that 37 companies (including Mitsubishi and Mitsui) had to stop rigging the bids for contracts with the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA). The Research and Study Group went on to point out: 'Even with partially tied aid, where companies from Japan and from other recipient countries are allowed to participate, the project specifications usually require "Japanese standards", meaning that even if local companies win bids they have to purchase all the materials from Japan.'

Aid is also used to provide Japanese companies with more business. For example, the yen loan extended to Indonesia for the development of oil and liquid natural gas, and the one given to China for the construction and modernization of coal-related transport systems, were both designed to ensure the steady delivery of energy resources to Japan, rather than to benefit the aid-receiving country.

In June 1992 Japan adopted an Official Assistance Charter. Its principles implied a shift in aid priorities from economics to giving Japan an international political platform, on which democracy and human rights would play as large a part as the introduction of a market economy.

Since the adoption of the Charter, serious violations of human rights have been observed in dozens of places where Japan gives aid, including East Timor, Burma, Thailand and China. But the Charter has not always made much difference. When the Indonesians massacred East Timorese in Dili in 1991, Japan did no more than ask the Indonesian Government for an official inquiry. Japan is the largest aid donor to Indonesia and its top trading partner.

On the other hand, in August 1995 the Japanese Government decided to freeze grant aid to China in protest at nuclear testing. In the event, maintaining Sino-Japanese relations overwhelmed this argument. There has been fierce debate about aid to China ever since it began in 1979: to date, Japan has provided 40 per cent of the aid received by China and played an active role in assisting economic reform. The Western view of China has been critical of its repression of the human-rights movement, while Japan argues that modernization encourages stability, which in the long run contributes to the stability of Asia as a whole.

TECHNICAL COOPERATION
JICA
BY THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN

RON GILING / PANOS

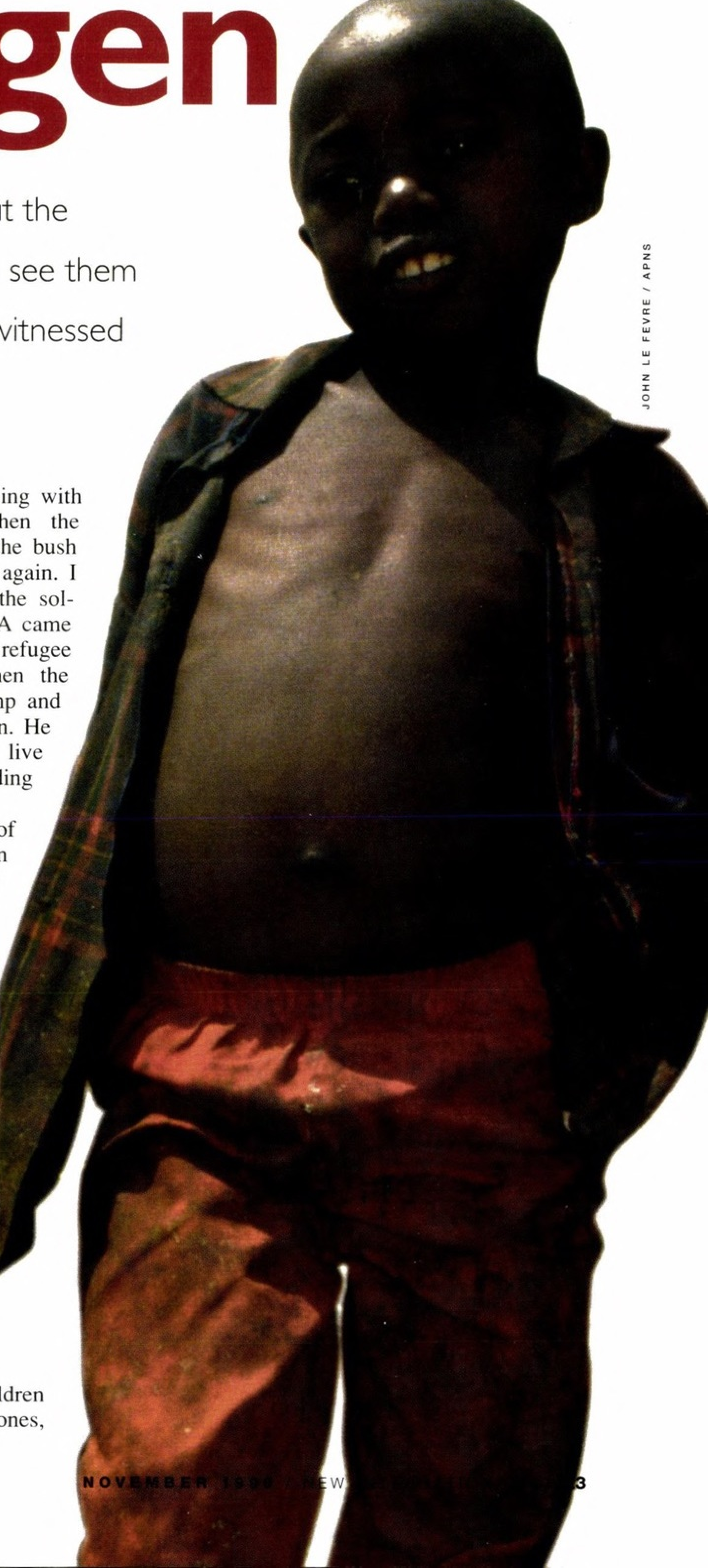
Japan is likely to continue with a reduced aid programme, keeping one eye on its own economic interests and the other on its standing in the world. Japanese citizens will need to be watchful over what happens next. ■

Manomi Suzuki is a freelance writer based in Tokyo.

The urge to rush in can lead to disaster.

No tears for Theogen

The world's aid agencies had to be there, but the Government of Rwanda wasn't always pleased to see them and lots of people got left out. **John Le Fevre** witnessed how easily things can go wrong.


JOHN LE FEVRE / APNS

IN June this year more than 200 children were still living on a garbage dump five kilometres outside Kigali – despite the largest relief operation the world has ever seen. When I visited the children they said they had been living there for almost two years and had never seen a relief-agency representative, government official or doctor.

In scenes reminiscent of Manila's infamous Smoky Mountain, they earned a subsistence living sorting through the items discarded by the UN and relief agencies. As garbage-laden trucks ground their way up the twisting dirt road to the tip site, the children gathered in the swirling dust, smoke and flies, waiting for an opportunity to clamber aboard and scour through the putrid, rotting trash in search of items to eat or sell at the local market.

Theogen Nyunza – who claimed to be 15 but looked closer to 12 – said the children lived on the dump site because they had nowhere else to go: 'All of our parents were killed in the war and here we can get food. It's a good place, it's safe and everyone looks after each other.'

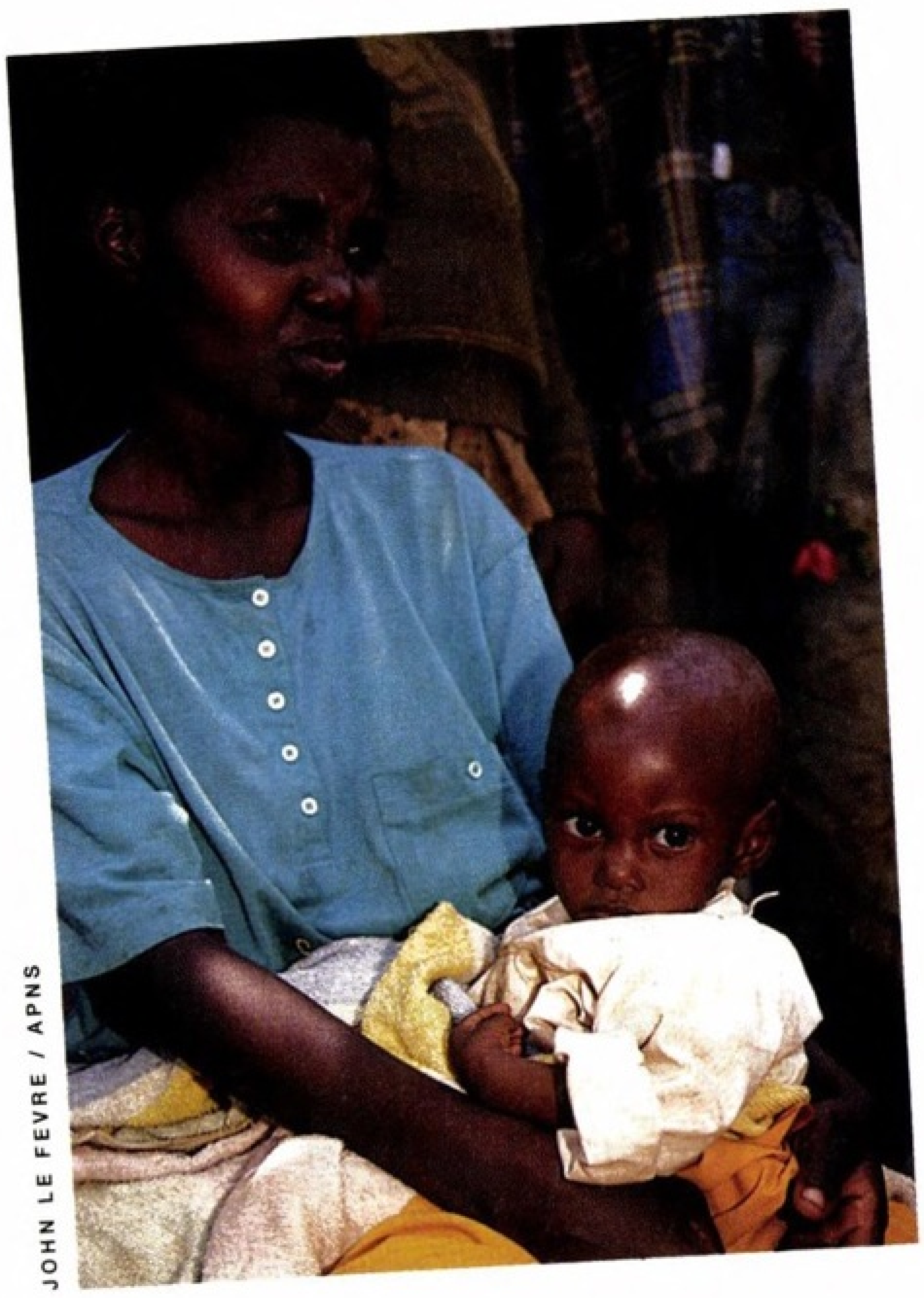
He explained how the children slept under newspapers, cardboard or coffee sacks. During the day the elder children took items they had recycled from the trash to the market to sell. With the money they bought food and water to supplement what had been found in the trash.

'We don't go to the city because the RPA (Rwandese Patriotic Army) beat us and chase us if they see us,' said Theogen. Before the war he was living with an older cousin, 'but then the bombs started. I ran into the bush and never saw my cousin again. I stayed at his house after the soldiers left, but then the RPA came and took some of us to a refugee camp near Byumba.' When the war ended he left the camp and went looking for his cousin. He couldn't find anywhere to live and walked to Kigali, ending up at the dump site.

As another load of garbage arrived, Theogen ran off to clamber aboard the truck in search of something to eat. Minutes later he was standing on top of it waving two small cans of cheese, discarded from a French military ration pack.

Another young boy, Savimana, ran away from the Hutu soldiers during the war and when he returned to his village he was told his mother, father, brothers and sisters were dead: 'There was no food and nowhere to live, so I came here.'

He said the older children looked after the younger ones,



JOHN LE FEVRE / APNS

Theogen Nyunza (previous page), and Edita and Jenine (above), live on the Kigali rubbish dump (below).

though every now and then one of them got very sick and died. When that happened the older children threw the body over the edge of the dump site: 'Last month a boy about five and a girl about six died and we just put them over the edge of the cliff.'

They all said they knew about the aid agencies in the city, but claimed neither they nor the Government was interested in them. Theogen spoke to some people in the city once, who said they would come and do something: 'They never came.'

For Edita and her ten-year-old son and baby Jenine, the relief operations had done nothing to improve her life. Pregnant when her husband was killed, she said her baby had never seen a doctor or anyone from a relief agency. Living in a borrowed hut just off the edge of the dump, some days she washed dishes and worked as a cleaner to get money, but there was not work every day.

'Sometimes friends bring me some food, but today no-one came so when that happens I come to the dump. There is always food here,' she said. When asked about Jenine she shrugged her shoulders and said the baby was not well. 'Maybe she will live and maybe she will die: I don't know.'

Members of the Canadian armed forces in the UNAMIR mission, however, certainly were aware of the children. Corporal Ron Riley, a materials technician from Newfoundland, said they had come to his attention about six months earlier, when a container of ration packs was found to be spoiled.

'We sent the ration packs to the tip to be destroyed,' he said, 'and when the group set fire to them the kids were leaping into the flames trying to get the food to eat. We tried to tell them they were no good and to stop them but it didn't make any difference. The next time we sent some up we had to send an armed escort to keep the kids away from the fire.'

Riley visited the dump a number of times after that and even took an interpreter with him. 'I asked the kids what they wanted most and they said soap... and a big house where they could all live together and go to school. I couldn't do anything about the house or school, but we were able to take them back some soap and clothes as well as some blankets and the like. I've spoken to a few NGOs but they all say they are too busy with other programmes.'

For its part, the Government made some fierce criticisms of the NGOs and expelled more than 40 – predominantly French – agencies.

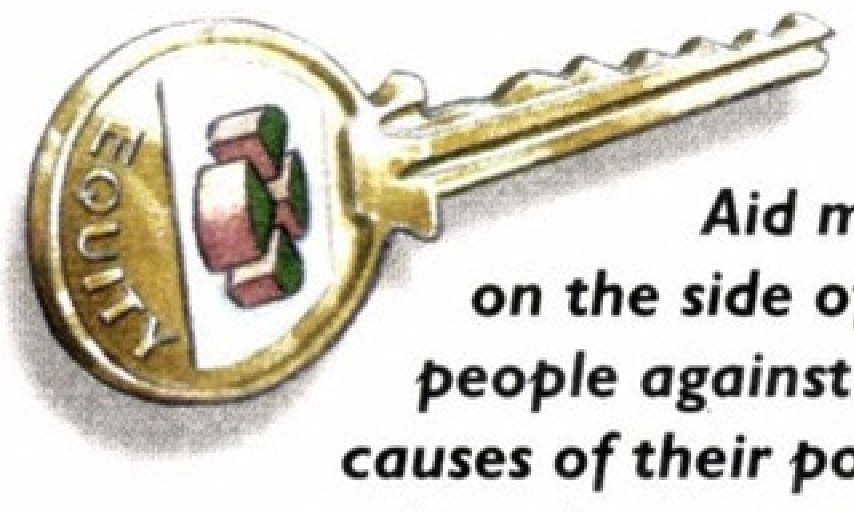
'It's two years since the war ended and at one time there were more than 260 NGOs here,' said Claude Dusaidi, chief political adviser to Vice President and Minister of Defence Major General Paul Kagami. 'There are still 102 today. We can only guess where all of the money has gone, but it certainly hasn't been to the Rwandese people... Every NGO here is driving around in new vehicles, living in big houses and paying themselves large salaries and for many the only business they are doing is raising more money to stay in business and pay themselves big salaries... We want to know where the money these organizations are getting is going, how it is being spent and what value the Rwandese people are getting out of it. If the NGOs don't want to tell us, then they can leave – the same for the UN.'

According to John Palmer, Rwanda Director for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), accusations that large amounts of money are being used for administration costs, salaries and overheads are simply not true. ADRA accommodated more than one person or family in all of its houses and bought second-hand vehicles if it could find them in good condition, he said. Most of the work was concerned with long-term development, though Palmer admitted: 'It is difficult sometimes to state where development begins and relief (or emergency) work ends.'

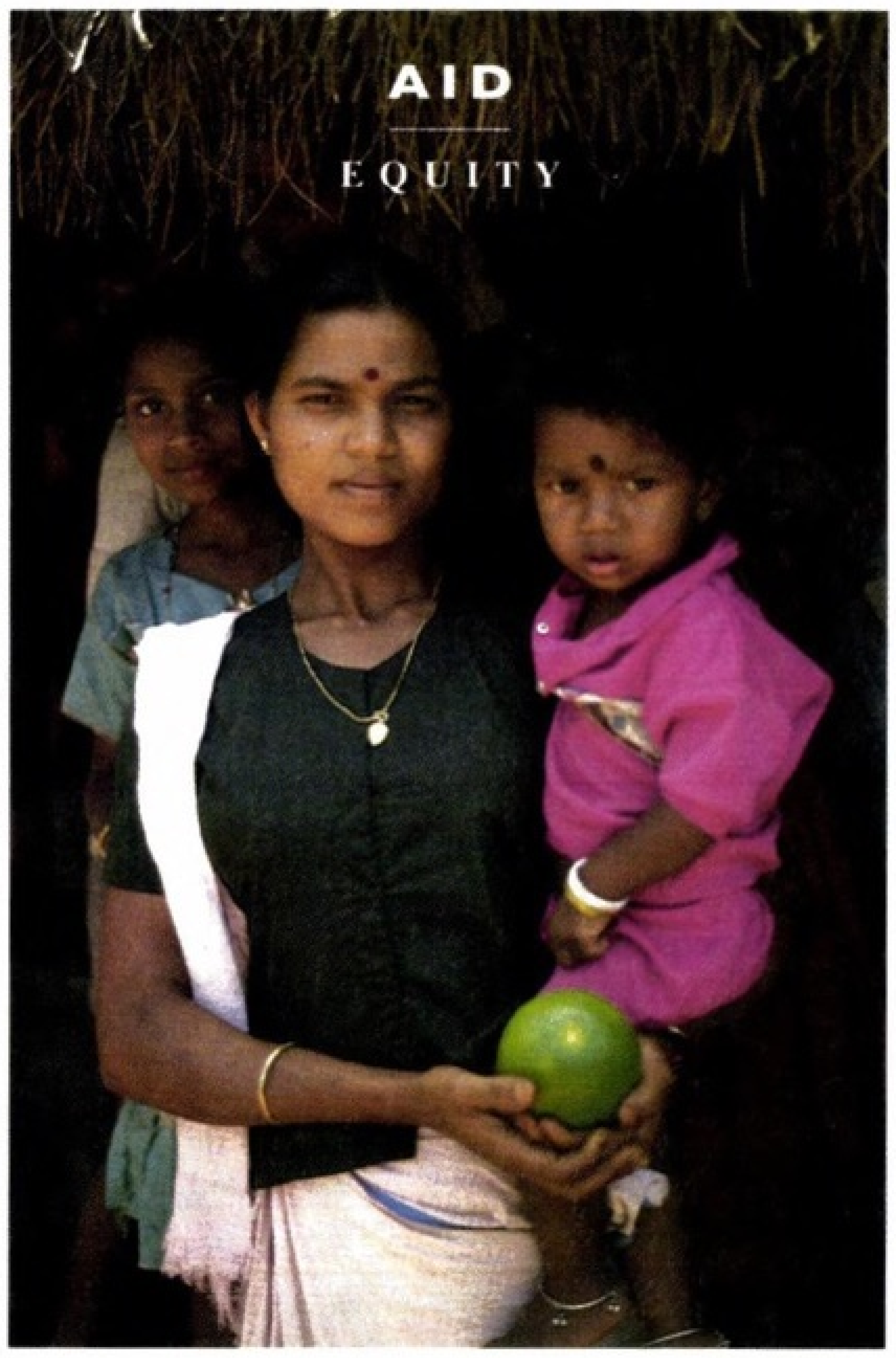
Even if a catastrophe on the scale of the genocide in Rwanda is bound to leave some needs unmet, there is little in this dispute to suggest what mistakes have been made, what lessons have been learned by all the parties involved, or how the plight of the children living on the rubbish dump might have been alleviated more quickly. ■

John Le Fevre is a freelance photojournalist based in Sydney, Australia.

JOHN LE FEVRE / APNS



Aid must be on the side of poor people against the causes of their poverty – not the other way around.


VANESSA BAIRD

A new Raj dawning

At first glance, India appears to be booming. But look a little deeper. **Mari Marcel Thekaekara** warns of mounting anger against the injustices that aid brings with it.

VISITORS who return to India after a gap of five or more years are delighted at the changes in the country. Our major cities seem to be thriving. You can call New York within seconds. There are international pay phones on every street corner. Those who can afford it have a range of new cars to choose from – in the old days you ordered an Ambassador and waited months, even years, for it to turn up. There is even a debate about taking India off the list of 'developing' countries.

There is, however, no debate about the fact that 70 per cent of our population will never own a car. We have McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken and Baskin Robbins' (BR) ice cream at a dollar a scoop.

Yet 70 per cent of the population earn a dollar a day or less. At a recent seminar on globalization, Amitava Mukherjee, executive director of Actionaid India, produced some shocking statistics – all the more startling because they came from the Government of India. Before 1990, the percentage of people living below the poverty line was 31.4 per cent. It is now officially 40.1 per cent – private sources indicate that the Indian Planning Commission thinks it is now 44 per cent, although it is not prepared to make this figure public. When we talk of poverty increasing by even one per cent in India we are discussing the lives of 9 million people – the total population is 900 million.

Translated into human terms the scenario runs like this. At ACCORD, our project in the Nilgiris, Malu told me that five years ago she used to buy 20 kilos of rice from the subsidized government ration shop at 2.75 rupees per kilo. Two years ago her rice entitlement dropped to 12 kilos and the price shot up to 3.25 rupees a kilo. Around the same time all pulses or dals – the only protein affordable for the majority of the poor – shot up from 10-12 rupees to 20-30 rupees a kilo.

Soon after this, it became apparent to our medical team that many participants in the Mother and Child programme, who had been on the road to good health on our medical charts and graphs, were now slipping back. Roopa and Deva, the doctors running the ACCORD health programme, were stunned by the adverse new trends. It was as if five years of health work were being wiped out. Roopa then realized that the women who used to go to the shop to ask for a rupee's worth of dal were now shooed off by the shopkeeper. Their one rupee could no longer buy them the handful of dal it previously did. The result – back to malnutrition.

> The price of rice has soared – and five years of health work with indigenous people in the Nilgiris hills have been wiped out.

What Roopa and Deva also saw, with sickening regularity, was that a malnourished child could not wait for the economy to 'stabilize'. The child would simply die.

Our pro-liberalization writers inform us in definitive terms that there will be a 'temporary' setback which will affect the unorganized, lowest economic strata of society; the landless labourers and artisans in rural India and the non-unionized, unskilled urban workers. What the economists do not explain is how these people are to sustain themselves until the promised land finally appears, or how long the 'temporary setback' is scheduled to last.

Under the new economic regime we are encouraged to produce cash crops. Special subsidies and soft loans – 'aid' by another name – are being floated to encourage the change. So the Thanjuvar rice belt is being transformed into a giant prawn pond to export shrimps to Japan. In the Nilgiris, people are being exhorted to change from food crops to flowers for export. Farmers grow orchids and anthuriums while vegetables rot in the fields because the farmers can't even get back the picking price. As a result, food production has dropped alarmingly in these areas.

For the poor, and the non-governmental organizations and social activists working with them, there is increasingly a feeling of despair and frustration as food prices spiral and development work seems to be going down the drain.

There is also a deep, burning anger. Non-governmental organizations feel like pawns in an international game. They know that poverty cannot be eradicated by aid which cripples. Illiterate farmers, who may not understand the intricacies of structural adjustment, have perceived the inherent threat. They have started to act on their anger. In Karnataka they have attacked Cargill (one of the world's largest seed multinationals) and Kentucky Fried Chicken. In Goa, activists led locals successfully to drive out Du Pont.

And politicians, ever-shrewd, are picking up on this anger. It is easy to rekindle memories of the Freedom Struggle. The images of 200 years of bondage are being invoked again with powerful rhetoric. People perceive the beginning of a different kind of economic domination – a new Raj dawning. But I suspect it will be a long march before we achieve freedom at midnight. ■

Mari Marcel Thekaekara is a regular contributor to the NI and works for ACCORD.

Official aid – a brief history

New world orders and theories of aid have come and gone – but old world problems have persisted all the while.

Aftermath

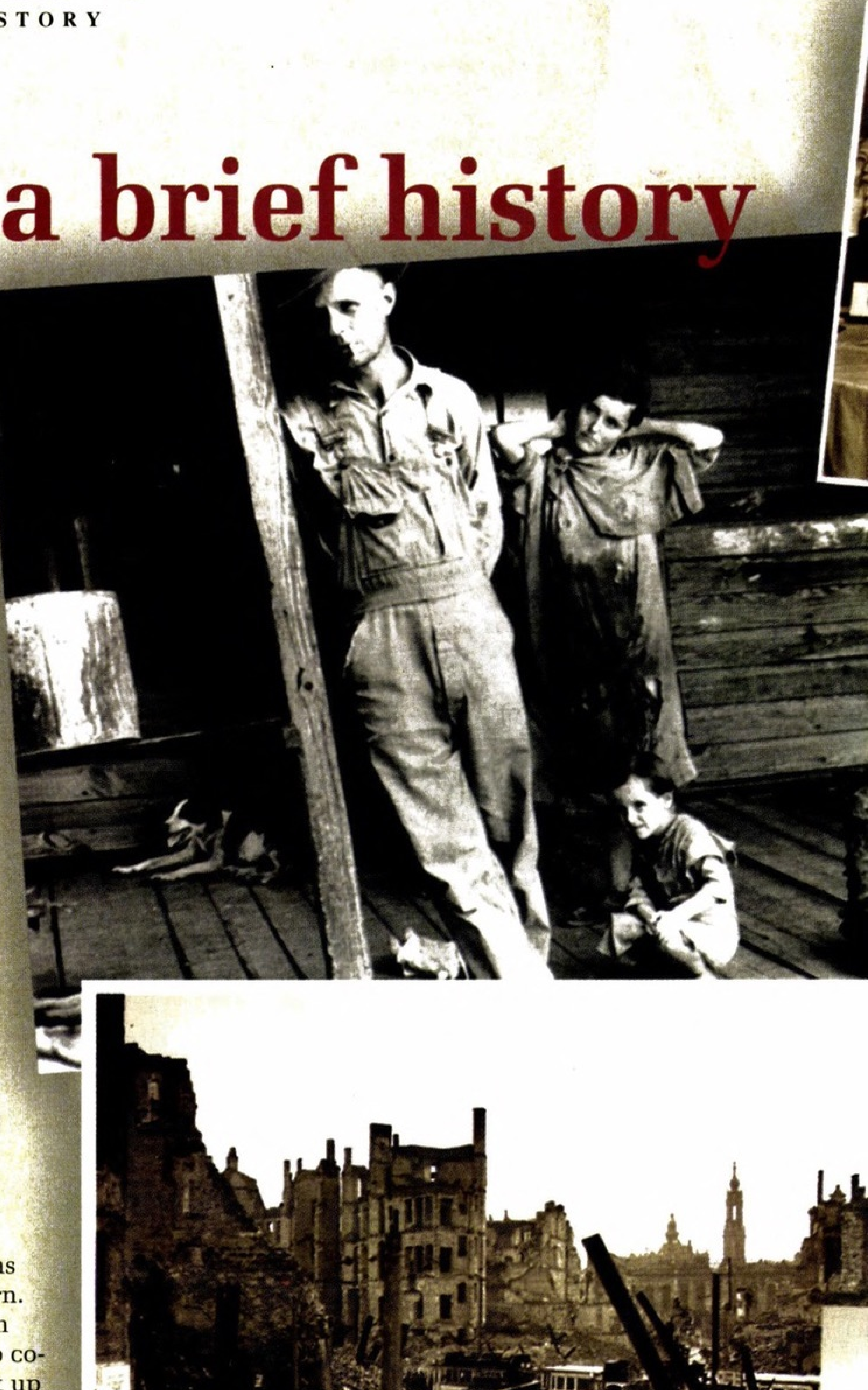
The two wars that began in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century were 'total': waged by industrial means on civilians as well as between armies, and with devastating results. In the interval between them came the Great Depression – the worst financial collapse in the history of capitalism – and revolutionary upheaval in Russia. The legacy of this chaotic experience pushed Northern governments into more active economic and social intervention. This shift was reflected internationally. A conference at Bretton Woods in 1944 agreed heavily modified versions of economic ideas for a 'new world order' proposed by John Maynard Keynes. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD – now known as the World Bank) was established to help the post-War reconstruction of Europe. Together with the foundation of the United Nations, Bretton Woods laid down the basic structure of the 'multilateral' financial agencies that has remained in place to this day.

Reconstruction

In 1948 the US Congress authorized the use of two to three per cent of US Gross National Product (GNP) until 1953 to finance grants for the reconstruction of Europe – what became known as the Marshall Plan. With this the present concept of aid was born. Three-quarters of the goods financed under this plan came from the US, mostly in the form of food aid. The recipients agreed to co-operate and make joint requests to the US. The organization set up to do this eventually became the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – today's rich-country 'club' whose Development Assistance Committee (DAC) includes all the major official-aid donor countries. All the new institutions were designed for, and controlled by, the North. Repeated attempts to establish alternatives based on the UN, in which the interests of the South were better represented, were thwarted.

Cold war

The end of the Second World War also ushered in a 'cold' war with the Soviet Union in which aid became a pawn. Massive US aid was sent to the island of Taiwan, to which the opponents of the Chinese revolutionary regime had retreated. Following the Korean War – which began in 1950 – Western aid financed more than 68 per cent of total imports and 60 per cent of investment in South Korea, while aid from the 'Communist Bloc' financed a third of national revenues in North Korea. Former European colonies were becoming independent. A meeting of Southern heads of government in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955 gave rise to the Non-Aligned Movement. The idea of a 'Marshall Plan for the South' was taken up by Bruno Kreisky, Austria's Federal Chancellor, in 1958. In the same year the World Council of Churches called for one per cent of the GNP of rich countries to be devoted to aid in the South: an idea adopted by the General Assembly of the UN in 1960.



Clockwise from top left: Great Depression in the US; Bretton Woods conference; Marshall Aid; famine in Ethiopia; Lester Pearson and Harold Wilson; the ruins of Dresden.

S.S.R.
UNITED KINGDOM
YUGOSLAVIA

FIRST CARGO OF CARIBBEAN SUGAR SHIPPED UNDER MARSHALL AID

Development

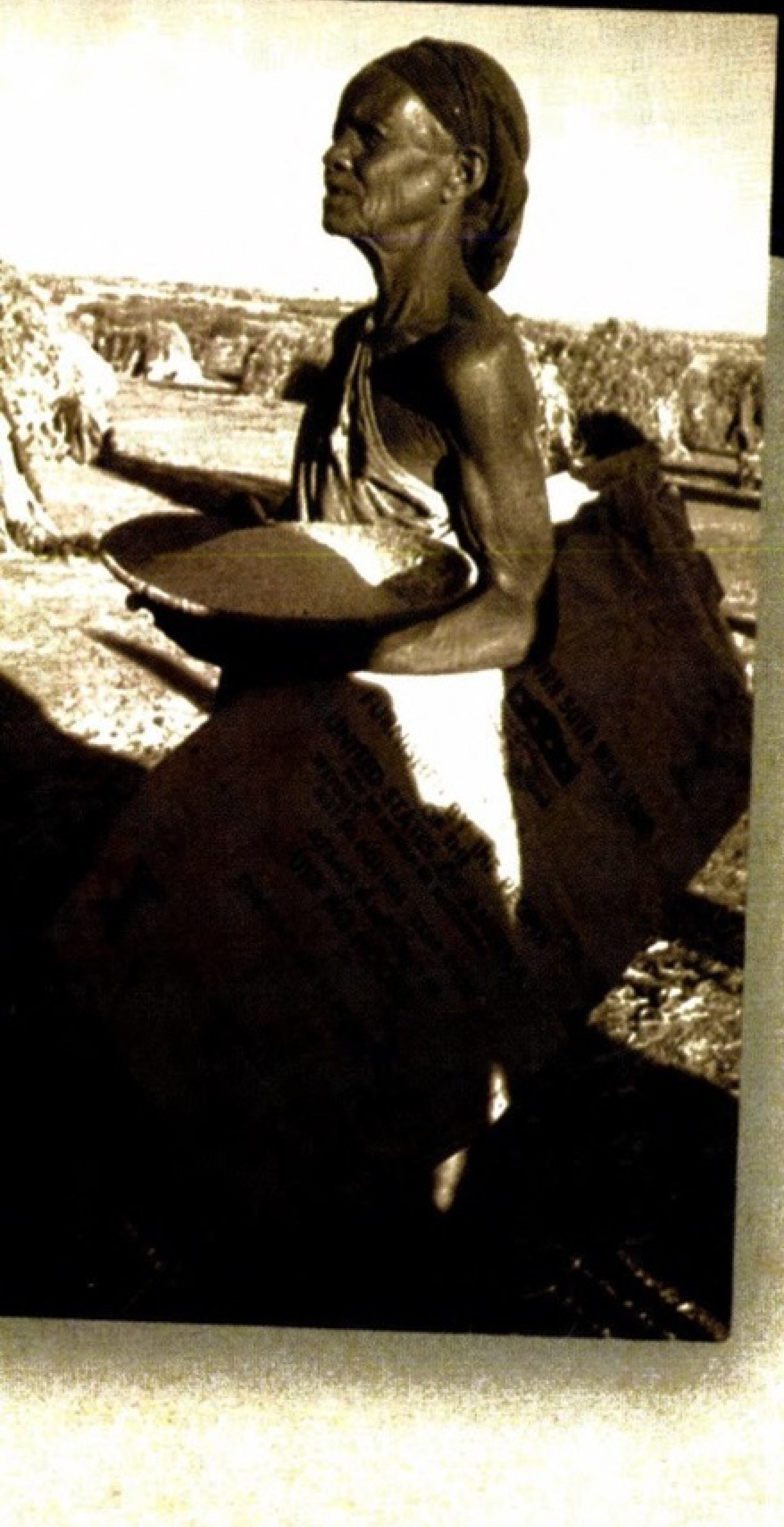
In response to the glaring post-colonial poverty of the South, the UN declared the 1960s to be a 'Decade of Development'. Most 'bilateral' aid between individual countries was 'tied' to narrow commercial or political self-interest in the donor country. West Germany would not give aid to any government that recognized East Germany, while the US strategic and domestic agenda prompted aid to Israel. Great reliance was placed on promoting the 'Green Revolution' to meet the food needs of a world population that was expanding rapidly, especially in the South. But the one-per-cent aid target was never reached. In 1969 a Commission led by Lester Pearson, the Canadian Prime Minister, called for 0.7 per cent of rich countries' GNP to be given in aid, excluding commercial loans and military expenditure – the average was about 0.5 per cent at the time. This was accepted unanimously by members of the OECD.

Redevelopment

The Pearson Commission recommended a 'Second Decade of Development' for the 1970s. It got off to a bad start: by 1973 aid levels had fallen to 0.29 per cent of GNP. In 1972 Robert McNamara, head of the World Bank, called for a reorientation of aid towards the poorest 40 per cent of the world's population. 'Targeting the poor' became the new orthodoxy. A series of UN conferences (on the environment in 1972, population and food in 1974, women in 1975, human settlements in 1977) underlined the failures and challenges of 'development' – particularly for women. The oil crisis in 1973 hit the South hard – and the process of recycling the oil-producers' huge cash surpluses through Northern private banks into 'Third World' loans began. In 1974 the UN endorsed the 'New International Economic Order' called for by the Group of 77 developing countries, who argued that aid was no substitute for a fair deal on basic economic issues like trade.

Lost decade

In 1982 a major financial crisis hit Mexico, which threatened to default on its foreign debts. The Brady Plan – the first major 'structural adjustment' programme – was negotiated between the US and Mexican Governments to protect Northern banks and prevent a global financial collapse. A crisis of debt began to overwhelm the South as interest rates rose and commodity prices fell. Structural adjustment, requiring cuts in public expenditure, privatization and strict anti-inflation measures, was the formula imposed to deal with it. Aid levels stagnated well below the 0.7-per-cent target. Large-scale projects like dams came under increasing criticism, particularly on environmental grounds. The 1980s became known as the 'lost decade'. The search for 'environmentally sustainable development' began. The economic success of the 'Little Tigers' (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore – all of which had at one time been recipients of substantial aid) seemed to offer a new model of 'export-led' economic growth in developing countries.



Washington consensus

In the latest 'new world order' after the collapse of communism, the acceptance of 'adjustment' by recipient countries became a uniform condition of almost all official aid. A 'Washington Consensus' emerged in 1990 as the World Bank declared that though poverty persisted only free markets could reduce it. However, growing anxieties about the threat of social unrest resulted in a New Policy Agenda. This demanded 'good governance' and 'ownership' of adjustment policies from Southern governments. An increasingly long list of conditions became attached to aid – no less than 111 in the case of Kenya in 1994. Civil conflict replaced the national contests of the Cold War and became the focus of humanitarian crises in Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda and elsewhere. The proportion of aid budgets devoted to peacekeeping and emergencies increased. And all the while the divide between rich and poor people everywhere widens sharply.

Sources: Kunibert Raffer and HW Singer, *The Foreign Aid Business*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 1996; *The Progress of Nations* 1996, UNICEF.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HULTON DEUTSCH; HULTON DEUTSCH; HULTON GETTY; ANDREAS MALETA / CAMERA PRESS; HULTON GETTY; HULTON DEUTSCH.

Demand and supply

TRYGVE BØLSTAD / PANOS

Hard truths have to be told and unpalatable facts faced to find the way forward.

Steve Hellinger has spent many years trying to make aid work better. He now says it's time to take sides: the major aid institutions have to demonstrate that they are worthy of continued support. He spoke with **David Ransom**.

DR: What do you see as the current state of foreign aid?

SH: Aid is on the decline, and I don't think we're going to recognize it in five or ten years. The traditional top-down approach was implemented with a vengeance during the 1980s, transforming economies from above without local input. The fall-out was that, more than ever before, those who had access to money and to power gained and those who did not lost. This just fed the scepticism of the public in the North, especially the United States, about foreign aid. They recognized that their aid wasn't reaching the people who really needed it. Combined with government budget cuts in the North, this led to a squeeze on foreign aid.

By 1990, those in power knew that this was unsustainable. Since they weren't about to change the nature of aid, they began throwing out relatively small amounts of money to treat the symptoms of the problem – support for poverty reduction, an emphasis on social funds, the creation of environmental funds, and so on – to remove the pressure to deal with the real cause of growing poverty and inequality. A lot of NGOs – certainly in the United States – followed the aid establishment and its money, while continuing to focus on the quantity rather than the quality of aid. This has diverted them from the main event, which is the type of aid and development process that is screwing things up in the first place.

DR: How exactly is this process screwing things up?

SH: Around 1980, Northern governments determined that they could help their commercial banks recover the large number of loans they had made to the South during the 1970s by making foreign aid contingent upon the adoption of structural-adjustment policies by Southern governments. These policies of deregulation, wage suppression, investment, trade liberalization and privatization also created ideal conditions for Northern corporate investors looking for low-cost production bases. The US Treasury, the Exchequer and the other finance ministries today are making not just multilateral and bilateral aid policy but the core of foreign policy as they transform the world economy.

Not only is the imposition of these measures highly undemocratic and the policies themselves extremely detrimental to local populations and local producers around the world, but they are also polarizing and destabilizing societies from Mexico to Russia and throughout Africa and Latin America. People are increasingly alienated and disengaged. The policies of aid are being made from afar and creating an environment that makes local-level development more difficult than ever. People are being forced to look continually outward for answers – for money, markets, advice, technology. The solutions are being found less and less often within these societies. It is so debilitating. Many in the South feel that this is reason enough to disengage from the foreign-aid game.

DR: Would you suggest getting rid of the entire aid industry?

SH: No, there are many good institutions –

Losing focus: 8,000 tonnes in store in Mozambique. Fatigue sets in when aid stops working.

private and a few public – which do excellent work helping to build capacity at the local level, which has been absolutely critical. It's been done in partnership, the way it should be done, and the people in the South have taken the lead. But the great majority of aid funds has been misused and done much to create this adverse situation in the South.

DR: Are Americans suffering from 'aid fatigue'?

SH: In the US there has long been a public disillusionment with foreign aid, because people have understood implicitly that it isn't going, by and large, where it needs to go – to people at the local level. Most Americans are suspicious about big institutions dispensing money, and we're much more isolationist, historically. 'Aid fatigue' in Europe has started emerging in the last few years for a lot of reasons, not least of which is the fact that things aren't working, especially in Africa. And it is very hard for us to ask taxpayers to continue to pay the bill for something that they know is not working. Yet some NGOs continue to do so, saying that aid to Africa, for example, should continue at high levels. People see through this, and their disenchantment has intensified as a result.

DR: Is it a matter, then, of simply dumping official aid programs?

SH: No, it's more complex than that. There are some hard choices we have to make. In the US 50 Years Is Enough Campaign, for example, we had to deal with the very real issue of IDA [International Development Association, the soft-loan window of the World Bank]. You have people in Africa saying that they need money to sustain social programs and for medical and industrial imports. But IDA money is being used by the World Bank for structural adjustment: 30, 40, 50 per cent of it in many cases. The Bank and some Northern NGOs say that IDA must be supported unconditionally because its resources are indispensable to the poorest countries. Yet the Bank itself is adamant about conditioning the provision of IDA funding on the adoption of draconian adjustment policies. So we have suggested as an answer to this dilemma pulling institutions like IDA out of the World Bank. We should move towards new, smaller mechanisms that can, for example, reach out and support emergent movements and organizations of civil society. These can help build, along with civil society, a strong 'middle level' in these countries so that important development work can be undertaken at the provincial and municipal levels.

DR: So what's the connection between aid and structural adjustment?

SH: The failure of structural adjustment, the beginning of a decline in the advances that had been made in infant mortality and illiteracy, the growth of poverty and inequality in these countries – these are not unfortunate by-products of foreign aid. They are the logical outcome of programs that concentrate wealth and ratchet down labor and environmental standards in the name of efficiency and competitiveness. This was not only predictable; it was predicted. Aid programs have been explicitly geared to creating attractive conditions for foreign investors. They have done this in part by keeping domestic interest rates high – and this has contributed, along with the inflow of cheap imports, to wiping out small and medium-sized local firms and farms and the jobs they provide. So has a policy of wage 'constraint', as this has sharply reduced consumer demand. Producers are pushed into the export markets, where competition is going up and therefore prices are going down. In the cocoa and coffee markets, for example, for every one-per-cent increase in production there was recently a two-per-cent decrease in price. It doesn't take a genius to see that such policies are a recipe for disaster.

DR: Where do you suggest we go from here?

SH: I think we have to go through a number of sequential realizations. The first is that there is a global battle going on between vested Northern and Southern financial and business interests on the one hand, and civil society on the other. We have to understand what side of this battle we're on. Then I think we have to conclude that the current system of official aid cannot work. It's had its shot. Fifteen years ago it made a shift from a liberal paradigm of throwing money at the problem, which didn't work, to one of opening up economies for the private sector, and that

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CRISPIN HUGHES / PANOS

Clothed in confusion: improvised self-help in Mogadishu, Somalia.

hasn't worked either. If we conclude that there's a battle going on and that the official structure is actually helping the other side; if we recognize that the best way to help is to support civil society in solving its own problems; then I think that leads us to the creation – in partnership – of new, much less ambitious structures and the elimination of the failed ones.

DR: What would these structures look like?

SH: Take USAID, for example. It currently has as good a leadership as it's ever had, but for all the efforts that the good people inside have made, it is still an arm of US foreign policy. You can see this, for example, in its commitment to structural adjustment, even in tinderboxes like Haiti. You need a fundamental restructuring so that aid institutions are fully open to engagement with civil society at the bottom and fully closed to interference on behalf of vested and political interests at the top. There has to be a strong role for civil society in the North through NGOs, but they cannot be as dependent as they are at the moment on public monies. This has affected the way they deal with policy issues. Instead of representing the interests of people in the South, they are increasingly supporting the interests of the aid institutions.

DR: What do you see as the job of NGOs?

SH: To help create the capacity for development and social change at the local level. But this is insufficient unless we also, by working in the North, help create space for people in the South. As long as Northern-controlled institutions like the World Bank and IMF effectively run the economies of the South, there is no way that Southern governments, even the enlightened ones, can respond to the demands of their own citizens. We have to transform these structures totally. The only way to do that is to push to have their funding cut back if real change isn't forthcoming.

DR: How successful do you think the campaigns for change have been so far?

SH: Up to a point, the global citizens' campaigns are working. But we're only at the first stage. Can the new leadership of the World Bank transform itself? We're engaged in a process with that leadership to determine exactly that. How sanguine are we? Well, quite honestly, we don't see very much in the history and structure of the Bank that makes us think we should be all that sanguine, but we're going to find out. If such institutions can't make fundamental changes as the world economy deteriorates for the vast majority of people, then they will eventually lose so much credibility that they will disappear. But not before tremendous damage is done.

So, as a community we have to come together and work for change based on a healthy respect for the capacity of people locally to understand their own situations and shape solutions. Not only in the South but in the North as well. You cannot dismiss citizens in the North as know-nothings. People are pulling back from foreign aid not because they are irrational, stupid or racist. They've supported foreign aid all these years with their tax money, and what have we given them? If we want public support for foreign aid we're going to have to go the extra yard to create a program worth supporting. ■

Steve Hellinger is co-founder and president of The Development Group for Alternative Policies (The Development GAP) in Washington, DC. He has worked extensively overseas with both citizens' groups and the major aid agencies, and is co-author of Aid for Just Development (1988).

ACTION

These are umbrella groups, which are a good first port of call for the debate on aid.

International: International Council for Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), Case postale 216, 1211 Geneva 21, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 732 6600; Fax: +41 22 738 9904; e-mail: icva_gva@gatekeeper.unicc.org

Europe: EUROSTEP, 115 rue Stevin, 1040 Brussels, Belgium. Tel: +322 231 1659; Fax: +322 230 3780; e-mail: eurostep@gn.apc.org

Aotearoa/New Zealand: Council for International Development/Kaunihera mo te Whakapakari Ao Whanui (CID), PO Box 12-470, Wellington. Tel: +64 4 472 6375; Fax: +64 4 472 6374; e-mail: pat@nzcid.wgtn.planet.co.nz

Australia: Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA), Private Bag 3, Deakin Act 2600. Tel: +61 6 285 1816; Fax: +61 6 285 1720; e-mail: acfoa@peg.apc.org

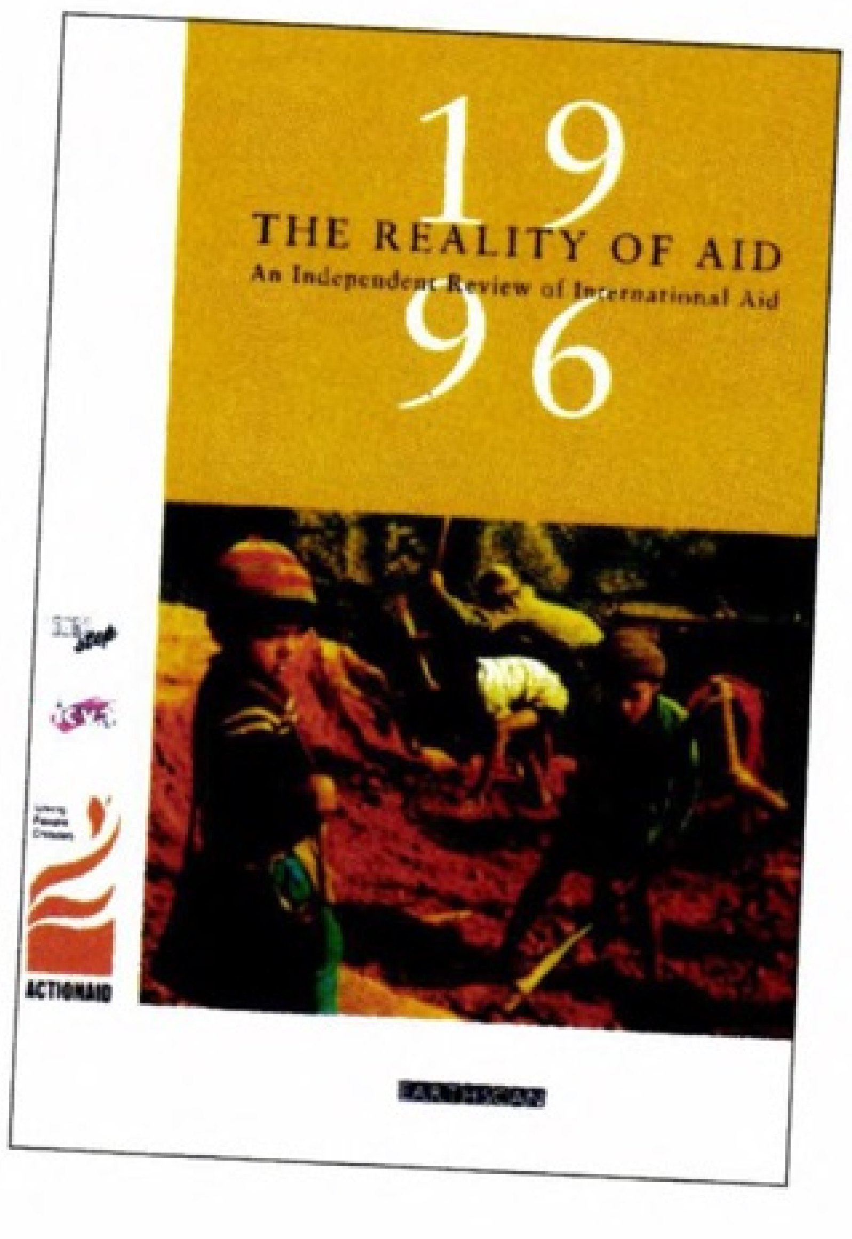
Britain: World Development Movement, 25 Beehive Place, London SW9 7QR. Tel: +44 171 737 6215; Fax: +44 171 274 8232.

Canada: Canadian Council for International Co-operation/Conseil canadien pour la coopération internationale (CCIC), 1 Nicholas Street, Suite 300, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B7. Tel: +1 613 241 7007; Fax: +1 613 241 5302; e-mail: ccicd-pu1@web.apc.org

USA: American Council for Voluntary International Action (InterAction), 1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suit 801, Washington DC 20036. Tel: +1 202 667 8227; Fax: +1 202 667 8236; e-mail: la@interaction.org

Also worth reading on..... AID

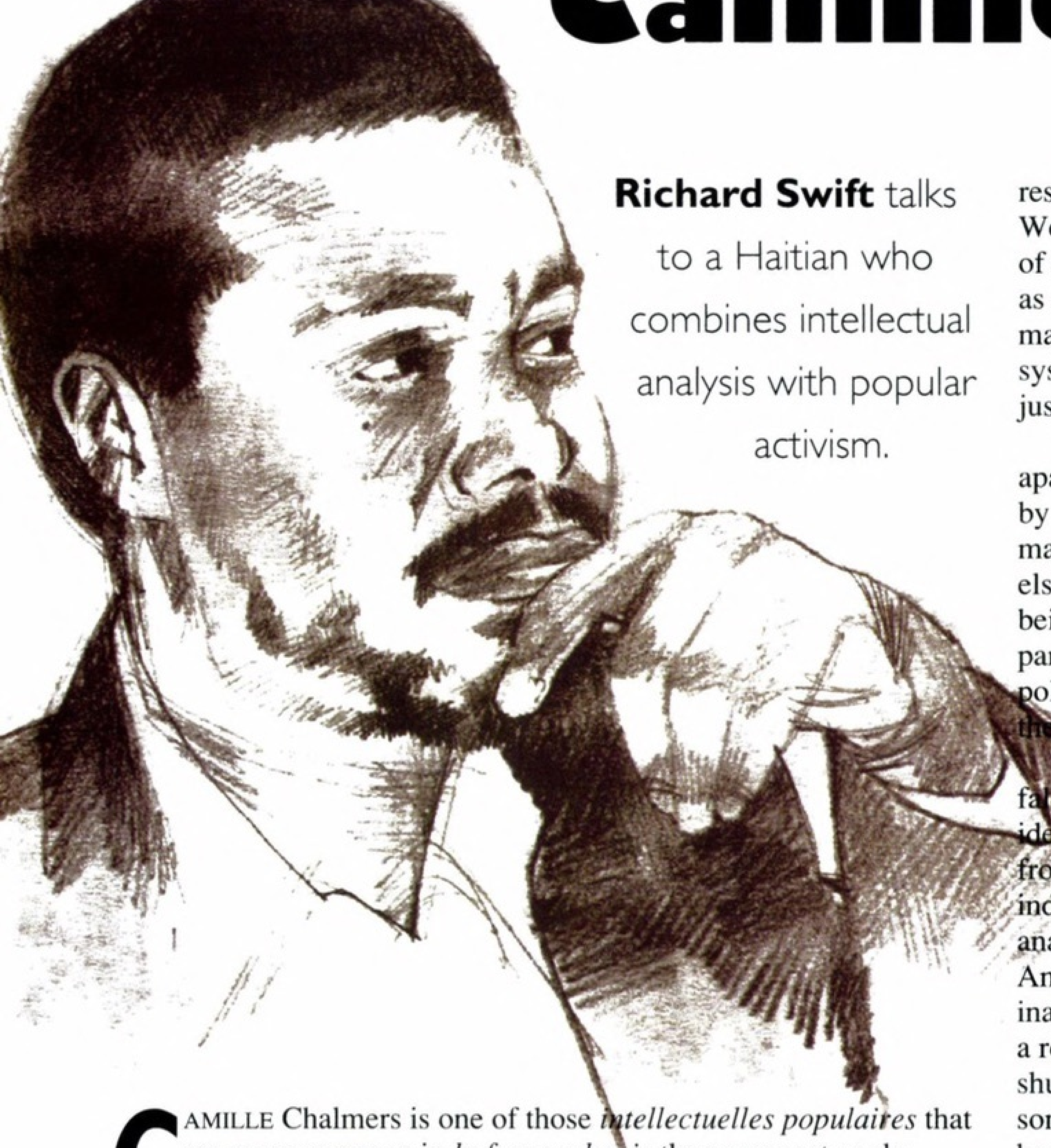
If you want to get a firm grip on the subject and keep it **The reality of aid 1996** (Earthscan, London) is indispensable. Updated annually and improving year by year – the 1996 edition includes some interesting features from the South – it gives you most of the hard facts you need to know about the major issues, plus a country-by-country breakdown of all the major aid donors.



For the rest, **Rarer than rubies** by Max van der Berg and Bram van Ojik (Novib, The Hague, 1996) is cogent and concise and comes straight from the horse's mouth (a leading Dutch aid agency). **Compassion and calculation – the business of private foreign aid**, edited by David Sogge (Pluto Press, London & Chicago, with the Transnational Institute, 1996), has a sharper cutting edge. A little blunter, but more comprehensive and authoritative, is **The foreign aid business** by Kunibert Raffer and HW Singer (Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 1996). On the NGOs, try **Beyond the magic bullet**, edited by Michael Edwards and David Hulme (Save the Children, Earthscan, London, 1995).

The **NI** Interview

Camille Chalmers



Richard Swift talks to a Haitian who combines intellectual analysis with popular activism.

CAMILLE Chalmers is one of those *intellectuelles populaires* that are more common in *la francophonie* than amongst anglo-pragmatists. Chalmers is a veteran activist of Haiti's impressive popular movement. He combines this with a broad analysis of the country's political and social problems. A trained economist, he was also the Director of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's staff from 1993 to 1994.

He smiles wryly as he disentangles the contradictions between the goals of the popular democratic movement that swept Aristide to power back in 1990 with the more recent 'democratization' that has occurred under the watchful eye of the US army and international peacekeepers.

The military coup that overthrew Aristide and 'beheaded' the popular movement forced Haitian democrats, says Chalmers, to 'gamble on US military intervention opening up the political space necessary to re-establish the networks of popular organization. Unfortunately this hasn't happened.'

For him democracy is not just about the niceties of parliamentary procedures but a living force in the sun-drenched streets of Port-au-Prince's sprawling slum community

Chambers believes that Haiti's popular democracy and its egalitarian values have been 'expropriated by US imperialism which projects itself as the defender of Haitian democracy and brought carbon-copies of US institutions into Haiti'. He points to the refusal of US authorities to release captured secret-police files to the Haitian justice system, or to extradite a prominent leader of the FRAP death squad, as examples of their lukewarm commitment to the new Haiti.

Today, Chalmers brings his considerable analytic skills to bear through PAPDA (The Haitian Platform for the Advocacy of Alternative Development) – a coalition of union and peasant organizations. He hopes to help establish a new consensus of resistance to the economic restructuring program the IMF and the World Bank are trying to impose on Haiti. He refers to this package of savage social cuts, economic deflation and privatization initiatives as a 'second coup d'état'. 'The purpose of this coup is to expel the majority of Haitian people from the political arena and uphold a system wherein 50 per cent of the national wealth is gobbled up by just one per cent of the population.'

With the sweeping use of his hands to aid him Chalmers picks apart the World Bank formula for Haiti. He is particularly incensed by the Bank's characterization of the only hope for the rural peasant majority as a rural exodus to 'some non-existent industrial sector, or else as boat people'. He details how Haitian agricultural society is being undermined by the cheap import of subsidized US grains, particularly rice. Many of the groups making up PAPDA were the political backbone of the rural resistance to first the Duvaliers and then the military.

With a quick grin and slow patience Chalmers unravels the fallacies on which he believes the World Bank model is based – the idea that the Haitian state is overdeveloped, that the country suffers from over-indebtedness, and that salvation lies in a low-wage industrial production underwritten by foreign capital. It is a familiar analysis: this set of remedies has been applied throughout Latin America with mixed results. Chalmers feels it to be particularly inappropriate for Haiti, where government has never played much of a role in fostering development or meeting popular needs. He shudders at the Bank's proposal to cut the Haitian civil service by some 50 per cent, which will mean the death knell for even the most basic health and education services. He is incredulous about Bank predictions that spectacular growth in the export sector is likely and will solve basic problems of poverty and unemployment.

For Chalmers an alternative to Bank plans cannot be formulated by technocrats but must grow out of popular organizations. PAPDA is working with a range of such groups together with critical economists to build the resistance to structural adjustment and work out alternative development priorities. He is heartened by the hostile response that IMF boss Michel Camdessus got in a recent visit to Haiti when the Upper House of the Haitian Parliament refused to meet him and the Lower House was openly sceptical about his structural-adjustment sales pitch.

A ready grin and easy laugh does not hide Chalmers' concern about the fate of Haiti's fledgling democracy. For him democracy is not just about the niceties of parliamentary procedures but a living force in the sun-drenched streets of Port-au-Prince's sprawling slum community, Cité de Soleil. He worries about the de-politicization of the people that may accompany their growing sense of betrayal as the Aristide leadership is drawn deeper into the US web of influence.

He places his hope and PAPDA's energy in a 're-dynamization' of Haiti's popular movement.

'It is popular mobilization that has been the source of all the gains in recent years in Haiti. Without this mobilization there is no hope of carrying out the basic tasks of development and democratic institution-building that the Haitian people both need and deserve.' ■

ILLUSTRATION BY ALAN HUGHES

Reviews

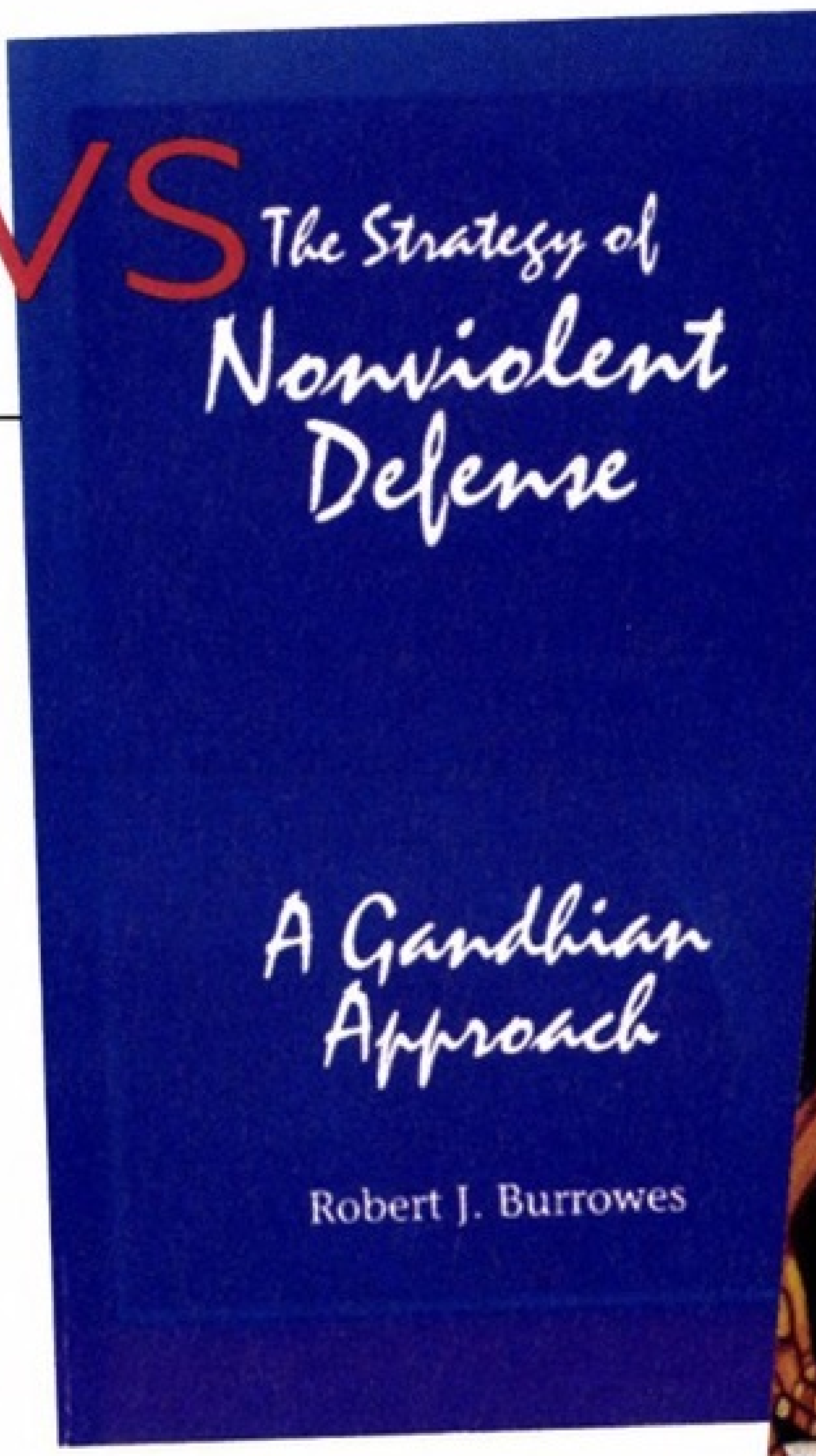
books

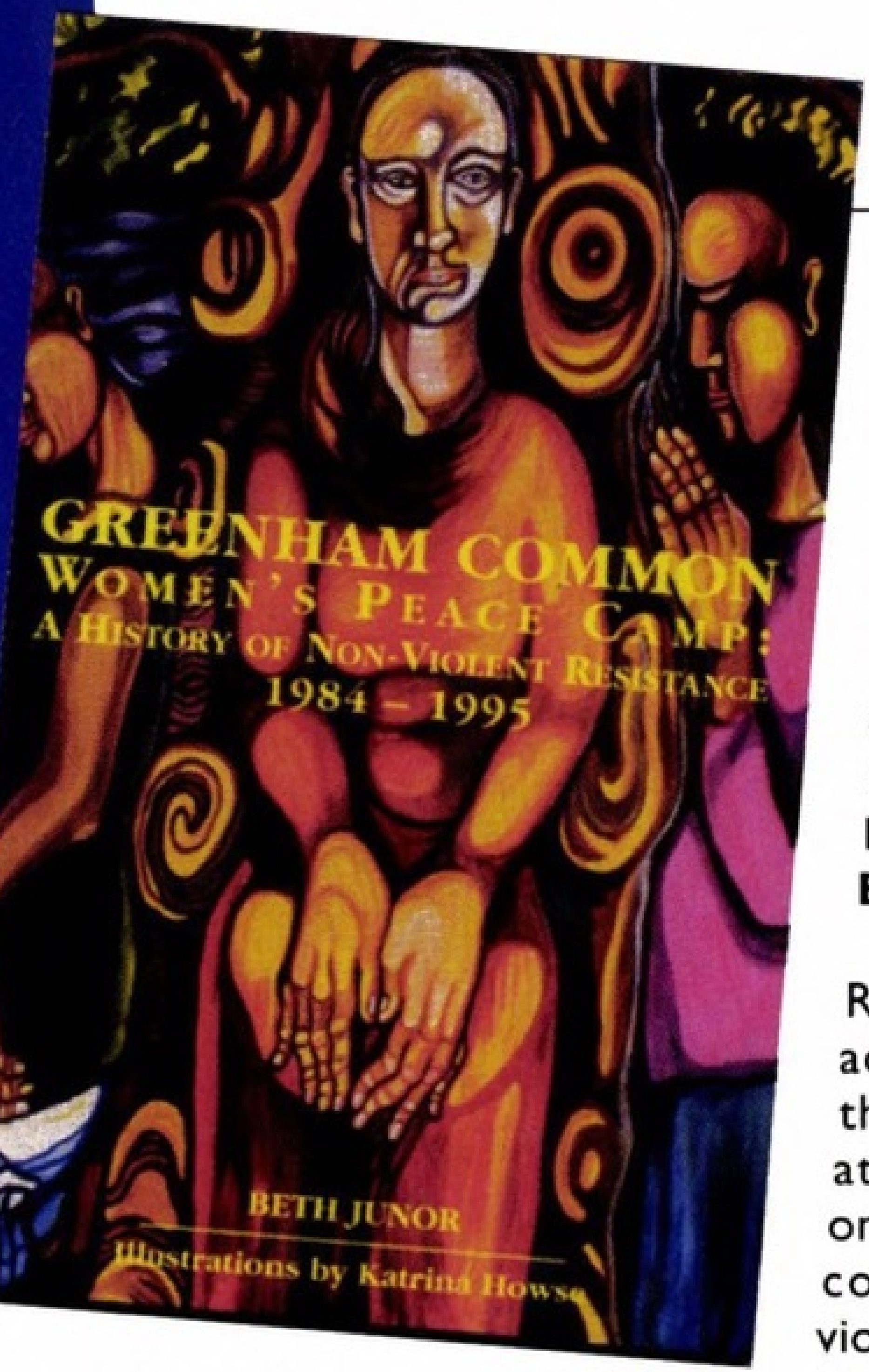
The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense: A Gandhian Approach

by Robert J Burrowes
(State University of New York Press, ISBN 0-7914-2588-6)

Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp: A History of Non-violent Resistance 1984-1995

by Beth Junor with illustrations
by Katrina Howse
(Working Press, ISBN 1 870736 93 1)




GREENHAM COMMON
WOMEN'S PEACE CAMP:
A HISTORY OF NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE
1984 – 1995
BETH JUNOR
Illustrations by Katrina Howse

'Can non-violent defence be an effective strategy against military violence?' This is the tough question posed at the opening of Robert Burrowes' important book, which insists that non-violent resistance needn't just be about protest but can be a valid strategic defence option. He argues persuasively that non-violent defence is the most effective response to violence because it addresses the causes of conflict and seeks for an outcome that will benefit all parties. And he draws upon an impressive array of historical examples which alone would be sufficient reason to read this book.

But there are others, too. Like the brilliant contextualization of aggression and war in terms of élite interests rather than the rhetoric of nationalism and related ideologies that are used to urge people to fight. Or the case for non-violence in the face of a ruthless opponent, where the argument ingeniously combines strategy for self-preservation with forms of resistance.

Above all, this book is concerned with strategy; with the 'how' of non-violent defence and, though written as theory, its aim is essentially practical.

He acknowledges the difficulty of non-violent practice – it rests on the participant's willingness to suffer even to the point of death, just as violence rests on the perpetrator's willingness to kill. What is amazing is that he makes the case for it compelling, not just morally but also strategically. And he draws a firm line between expedient non-violence which deals with symptoms and social defence that uses non-violence to transform the roots of conflict.

This book is truly an eye-opener. It should be required reading for all politicians. There are a few problems with it – the tediousness of the initial chapters where Burrowes sets up the framework for his arguments, an overly academic self-referentiality and the fact that it does not really deal with the issue of terrorism. But once the chapters on strategy have got rolling, the effort is handsomely repaid.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆

Reading Beth Junor's account of 11 years at the Yellow Gate Camp at Greenham Common one realizes the level of commitment that non-violent struggle can command. One or another of the camp's women gets arrested on almost every page. Even though the cruise missiles are gone the camp is still functioning and this record details some of the courage and sheer persistence of its activists. And their imaginative tactics too – such as the time some women dressed in police uniforms and successfully held up a convoy. Too partisan to be a coherent history and not overtly personal enough to hang together as her own story, the account ends up having something of a scrapbook feel and the amount of detail is probably over-generous for the casual reader. But the book does deliver a sense of the nitty gritty of a movement that became an inspiration for anti-military resistance worldwide. Proceeds from its sale will go to the camp.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ UP

music

Dilate

by Ani DiFranco
(Cooking Vinyl /Righteous Babe CD 103)

Once upon a time, an 18-year-old woman from Buffalo wanted to make music. But she felt that life was too short to wait around and play coy games with record companies. So she got in her car and travelled the country, playing one-off gigs at any place that would take her. Most did. She formed her own record company, Righteous Babe, to put out her songs, and seven years and eight albums later Ani DiFranco is North America's biggest self-made star.

DiFranco's story possesses all the elements of a wish-fulfilment dream. A punky-looking figure with hard-hitting songs, she is in complete control of her enterprise: from song-writing to recording to marketing. She is the latest in a long line of North American women musicians – that includes Holly Near, Michelle Shocked and Indigo Girls – who have struck out on their own, proving that individualism does not necessarily mean mainstream commercial failure. But rarely has this been achieved with such single-minded and rapid determination.

And she's clearly struck a chord with an audience tired of over-manufactured songwriters. Armed with a guitar – and anything else she can get her hands on – DiFranco's music has the kind of energy that imparts urgency to whatever subject is at hand. This has included the overtly political areas of abortion, sexuality and racism. Blessed with a salty vocabulary, she has put several f-words – including feminism – back into folk.

Dilate is a concentrated album, focusing on a relationship from several different angles. With Andy Stochansky on drums, the result is one of raw and choppy rhythms coupled with an explosive delivery. Take the opening song, 'Untouchable Face' – a compelling, edgy number whose anger is unmistakable. But there's much more besides: there's humour and, below a spiny surface, a tenderness. And DiFranco's a sharp lyricist too – her earthy observations on the minutiae of emotional life are a treat.

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆ LG

film

The Perez Family

by Mira Nair

With *Salaam Bombay*, Indian film director Mira Nair made her mark as one of the most original, up-and-coming talents on the world film scene. Her ability to look beyond stereotypes and cultural clichés set her a world apart from Hollywood.

In her follow-up film, *Mississippi Masala*, she was admittedly getting closer to that dominating tradition. Now with **The Perez Family** she seems, sadly, to have embraced it. This light-hearted comedy could well leave you thinking that *cha cha cha* and swinging hips are all that can be said about Hispanic culture. And although based on an actual historical event, the Mariel Boatlift of 1980, the film makes no real reference to the Cuban political and social context.

Marisa Tomei plays the part of Dottie Perez, a young Cuban prostitute who sets off for the US, seduced by the American Dream and hoping to awake from it next to John Wayne. In the same boat is political prisoner Juan Raul Perez (Alfred Molina) who is heading towards Florida where his wife Carmela (Anjelica Huston) has lived since her escape from Cuba 20 years ago with their daughter Teresa (Trini Alvarado).

A mistake by the US immigration officials leads to recording Juan Raul and Dottie as husband and wife. Not only do they share the same Perez name but so, it seems, does almost everyone else in the American refugee camp – making them, in the most literal sense, 'one big happy family'.

The Perezes seem to have no difficulty in moving in and out of this rather surreal camp, where officials have a golden heart and do their best to help. The story develops into a romantic melodrama, rather patronizing in its *mañana*, and replete with exoticism and Carmen Miranda lookalikes.

There are some compensations, though. It's good to see Celia Cruz, the Queen of Salsa, on screen and the soundtrack by Arturo Sandoval is simply brilliant.

Politics ☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

CR

STAR RATING	
Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews by **Urvi Patel, Louise Gray, Catalina Ribalta**
Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

Zami

...being the book about being different.

'I HAVE often wondered why the farthest position always feels so right to me; why extremes, though difficult and sometimes painful to maintain, are always more comfortable,' writes Audre Lorde in the opening pages of **Zami**.

This 'biomythography' tells the story of her growing up in Harlem, in a Grenadan-Barbadian immigrant family, and coming of age as a Black, radical, 'gay-girl' in McCarthy's America in the 1950s.

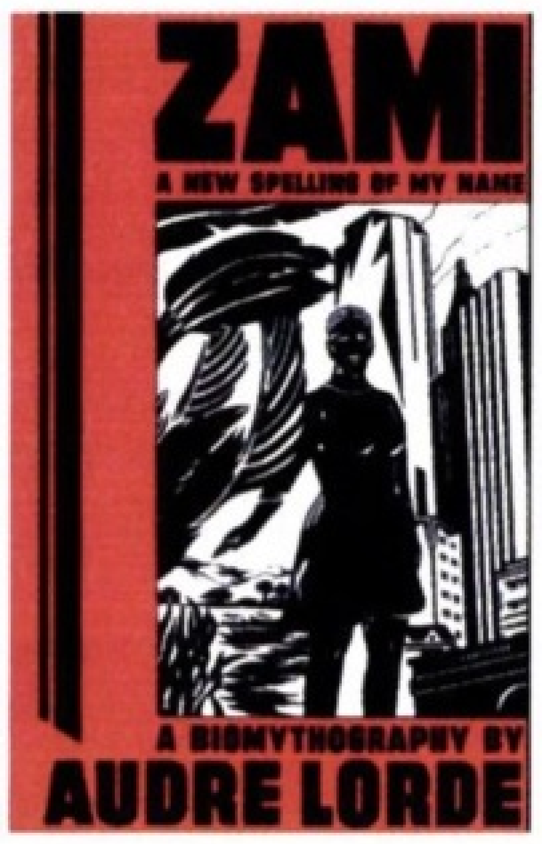
When I first read this book, in the late 1980s, a piece of anti-gay legislation called Clause 28 was being passed in Britain. If applied the law meant, amongst many things, that books like **Zami** would be banned from public libraries, schools or other local authority-funded institutions on the grounds that they 'promoted homosexuality'. In effect the law turned out to be a damp squib, unclear and difficult to apply. But it created a climate of insecurity and anger that brought hundreds of thousands of lesbian and gay people out on the streets in a surge of protest.

What struck me about **Zami**, however, was not so much the intrusive power of homophobia – though considerable – but that of racism. The fact remains that you can, at least some of the time, hide your sexuality. You cannot ever hide the colour of your skin. Audre Lorde brings extraordinary intimacy, immediacy and intelligence to the telling of her story – whether she is describing the experience of grinding West Indian spices in her mother's kitchen or the gobs of spit that land on their coats when they go out ('people spitting in the wind,' says her mother. No mention of racism). And racism is taboo in the family; her parents believe that the best way they can protect their children is to pretend it does not exist. The children are warned not to trust white people but are never told why. Audre gets to learn that by herself.

'Two weeks after we moved into the new apartment, our landlord hanged himself in the basement. *The Daily News* reported that the suicide was caused by his despondency over the fact that he had finally had to rent to Negroes. I was the first Black student in St Catherine's School, and all the white kids in my sixth-grade class knew about the landlord who had hanged himself in the basement because of me and my family. He had been Jewish; I was Black. That made us both fair game for the cruel curiosity of my pre-adolescent classmates.'

Her teens are filled with rebellion, poetry and a passionate friendship with another wild, but suicidal, girl. Audre finally runs away from home – and the awesome power of her mother – and embarks on a life of hazardous poorly-paid jobs, part-time studying, drinking and taking drugs with other rebellious girls and coming to terms with her sexuality. There follow intense engagements with women of all kinds, linked only by pariah status of one kind or another.

'I remember how being young and Black and gay and lonely felt. A lot of it was fine, feeling I had the truth and the light and the key, but a lot of it was purely hell.' For the young Audre the idea of different parts of her life coming together is too risky to contemplate. 'Downtown in the gay bars I was a closet student and an invisible Black. Uptown at Hunter [College] I was a closet dyke and general intruder.'



Towards the end of the book Audre, now in her early twenties, gets together with another aware, Black, gay woman – Afrekete. 'We talked about how Black women had been committed without choice to waging our campaigns in the enemies' strongholds, too much and too often, and how our psychic landscapes had been plundered and wearied by those repeated battles and campaigns.'

'It makes you tough though,' Afrekete tells Audre – if you don't go under. And the two of them will survive 'because we are both too tough and too crazy not to'.

In **Zami** – more than in her other overtly political writings – Lorde displays her rare talent for writing originally and sexily: 'Little hairs under her navel lay down before my advancing tongue like the beckoned pages of a well-touched book,' is one among many examples. And the erotic moments her characters share are very moving. 'I felt that there had never been anything else my body was intended to do more than to reach inside of her coat and take Afrekete in my arms, fitting her body into the curves of mine tightly, her beige camel's hair billowing around us both, and her gloved hand still holding her door key...'

There's a special vision that comes from living on the margins of society. Jean Genet explored it; so did Lorde in her different, equally fearless way. What comes across in Lorde's writing is a life fully lived, fully embraced. And Lorde's voice is so intimate and unaffected it can speak to anyone, whatever your race, gender, class, sexuality, or capacity for craziness. ■

Vanessa Baird

Zami: a new spelling of my name by Audre Lorde was published in 1982 and is available in reprints by Crossing Press (Freedom, California) and Pandora (London).

Curiosities

QUESTIONS THAT HAVE ALWAYS INTRIGUED YOU ABOUT THE WORLD WILL APPEAR IN THIS, YOUR SECTION, AND BE ANSWERED BY OTHER READERS. PLEASE ADDRESS YOUR ANSWERS AND QUESTIONS TO 'CURIOSITIES'.

Does giving blood benefit the donor?

● Further to the answers given in **NI 282** researchers in Finland and the US have good reason to believe that donating blood on a regular basis actually confers major health benefits.

Dr Jerome Sullivan from the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Charleston, North Carolina proposed in 1981 that iron is the major risk factor in cardiovascular disease. He noticed that younger women don't get heart disease, even if they have a hereditary condition that gives them extremely high cholesterol levels. After the menopause, however, the risk increases to match that of men. Dr Sullivan believes that this is because younger women menstruate and therefore do not accumulate excess iron in their tissues until after the menopause. Men accumulate it from the age of 20 onwards.

Recent research at the University of Kansas has supported Dr Sullivan's theory by showing that men who donate blood three times a year reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease by 50 per cent. There is also evidence to suggest a reduced cancer risk of 40 per cent.

The American findings are backed up by other studies at the University of Kuopio in Finland.

This news does not mean that cholesterol has no part to play in heart disease. Rather it means that the big biochemical picture is more complicated than we first thought. It is certainly good news for blood banks which are always in need of new donors!

Meredith Smith
Heathmont, Australia

Is there an organization that recycles computers and small electrical goods?

● Over 400 tonnes of computer equipment is discarded each week in the 'Square Mile' of the City of London alone. Cyber-cycle is a non-profit-making company which will collect obsolete computer equipment from businesses, refurbish it and sell it on – with guarantees – to schools and community groups at low cost. Cyber-cycle can be contacted on 0171 241 4111.

Ralph Skrimshire
Woodbridge, England

Another outfit that recycles computers is Mana Organization, Unit E, Ashburton Estate, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, England.

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

What was the 'World Citizens Movement' and who was Gary Davis? Where can I read about them?

F Bowring
Sheffield, England

I have been looking for a UK-based car insurance company that offers some ethical content but have drawn a blank. Does anyone know of one?

Simeon Hope

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ANSWERS PLEASE SEND THEM TO **CURIOSITIES, NEW INTERNATIONALIST, 55 RECTORY ROAD, OXFORD OX4 1BW, UK**, OR TO YOUR LOCAL NI OFFICE (SEE INSIDE FRONT COVER FOR ADDRESSES).

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS SECTION ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF **NI**.

The NI Crossword

No. 5 by Axe

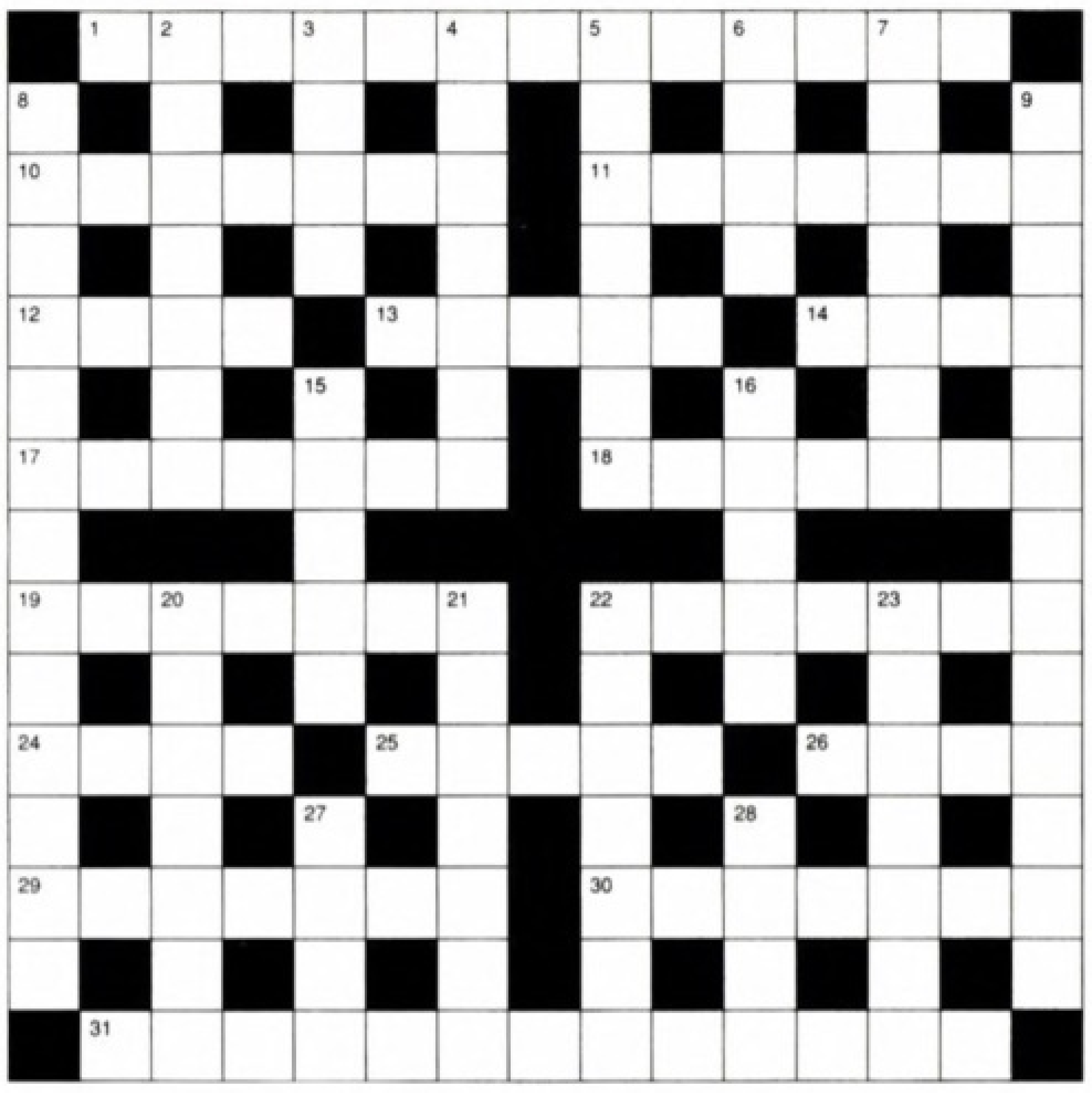
CRYPTIC

Across

1 Cascades where the queen meets her end (8,5)
10 Japanese island alright, in a way, but seeing no end to it (7)
11 Authority of a bishop takes grip in the interior (7)
12 Army of Shi'ites invades Panama lines (4)
13 The mission statement of the croupier is perfect (5)
14 Pulverize this type of novel (4)
17 Castro's guerrilla's repeated links with North Russian antagonist (7)
18 Regarding the heart of the acrid problem that pursues California... (7)
19 ...the endless state experiment about nothing is for the Chinese philosophers! (7)
22 Convert book about Hosea, minus the last page, back to emergency fuel (7)
24 Landing in France - in Paris or Lyon environs (4)
25 Messenger of love embroiled in grudge (5)
26 Parliament? Commons at least! (4)
29 Type of lettuce which will wilt under 31... (7)
30 ...sounds more fixed, but begins to move to 29 from here... (7)
31 ...when put in a greenhouse, effectively! (6,7)

Down

2 Plagiarize Tati trick in the mime where the head is removed (7)
3 Furniture supplier with branches in India? (4)
4 Quail, so to speak, under first rally, then faint under the African (7)
5 Spies wreck a comeback for the old language (7)
6 Make bail arrangements in the Midi-Pyrenees region... (4)
7 ...for old ANC leader - from hut complex - in the French composer hearing (7)
8 The church woman beheaded, Catherine Short, caught in frolic and left loudly (5,8)
9 The 'Typhoon' and the 'Hurricane' feature strongly in this air battle! (8,5)
15 Spell 'disorientate' phonetically (5)
16 Film the earth's surface (5)
20 The pipe one must lubricate thoroughly (3-4)
21 Northern gale, veering south-east at first, makes land in West Africa (7)
22 The state of having a song in my head? (7)
23 Alcoholics Anonymous involved in hint I got drunk discovering the Caribbean (7)
27 The Yugoslavian initially coming from the south-eastern region of Belgrade (4)
28 Briefly, Mother, I am hurt (4)



QUICK

Across

1 The alternative name for the Mosi-oa-tunya on the Zambesi (8,5)
10 Japanese island taken by the Americans, June 1945 (7)
11 Mediator or referee (7)
12 Radical Shi'ite faction based at Borj al-Barajneh, Lebanon (4)
13 Epitome (5)
14 The compressed flesh of plants (4)
17 Citizen of troubled Russian Republic (7)
18 Relating to part of the stomach or the heart (7)
19 They believe in the forces of yin and yang (7)
22 Motor fuel containing 10% ethanol as an economical measure in wartime (7)
24 Paris' second airport (4)
25 Legate or representative (5)
26 The —— of Worms, 1521, outlawed the teachings of Martin Luther (4)
29 Isostatic phenomenon which has only 10-20% of its bulk visible (7)
30 Agent of erosion, beginning life in a cirque or corrie (7)
31 The corollary of the 'greenhouse effect' (6,7)

Down

2 Mimic (7)
3 Hardwood found naturally in the Far East (4)
4 Central African, formerly colonized as part of German East Africa (7)
5 Semitic language, dialects still used by some Christian sects (7)
6 French city, capital of the Tarn department (4)
7 President of the ANC, 1952; Nobel Peace Prize winner, 1960 (7)
8 Church of 600 million followers, split from the Eastern Orthodox Church, 1054 (5,8)
9 General term given to a violent air turbulence starting in equatorial latitudes (8,5)
15 Aspect of the moon according to the degree of illumination (5)
16 Hard exterior (5)
20 The reservoir, or the means of extraction from it, of liquid mineral (3-4)
21 African country of which the Gambia is an enclave (7)
22 Autonomous Caucasian state, capital, Tbilisi (7)
23 Inhabitant of the western part of Hispaniola (7)
27 The largest ethnic group remaining in the Republic of Yugoslavia (4)
28 Badly wound (4)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION

A	R	C	H	I	M	E	D	E	S	S	C	R	E	W
M	■	A	■	O	■	L	■	M	■	A	■	E	■	E
E	N	T	E	N	T	E	■	P	A	P	Y	R	U	S
R	■	E	■	A	■	C	■	R	■	S	■	O	■	T
I	N	C	A	■	O	T	T	E	R	■	P	U	N	E
C	■	H	■	O	■	O	■	S	■	C	■	T	■	R
A	Q	U	I	F	E	R	■	S	A	L	W	E	E	N
N	■	■	■	F	■	■	■	■	■	A	■	■	■	P
I	R	E	L	A	N	D	■	C	O	R	S	A	I	R
Z	■	N	■	L	■	A	■	H	■	E	■	K	■	O
A	I	D	S	■	A	M	M	A	N	■	K	I	E	V
T	■	E	■	T	■	P	■	P	■	F	■	H	■	I
I	S	M	A	I	L	I	■	T	A	L	L	I	N	N
O	■	I	■	D	■	E	■	E	■	O	■	T	■	C
N	U	C	L	E	A	R	F	R	E	E	Z	O	N	E

ENDPIECE

Lion

Christine Aziz describes how the fate of a once-noble beast has come to resemble that of the people of Kabul, Afghanistan, on the eve of the takeover by *Taleban* fundamentalists.

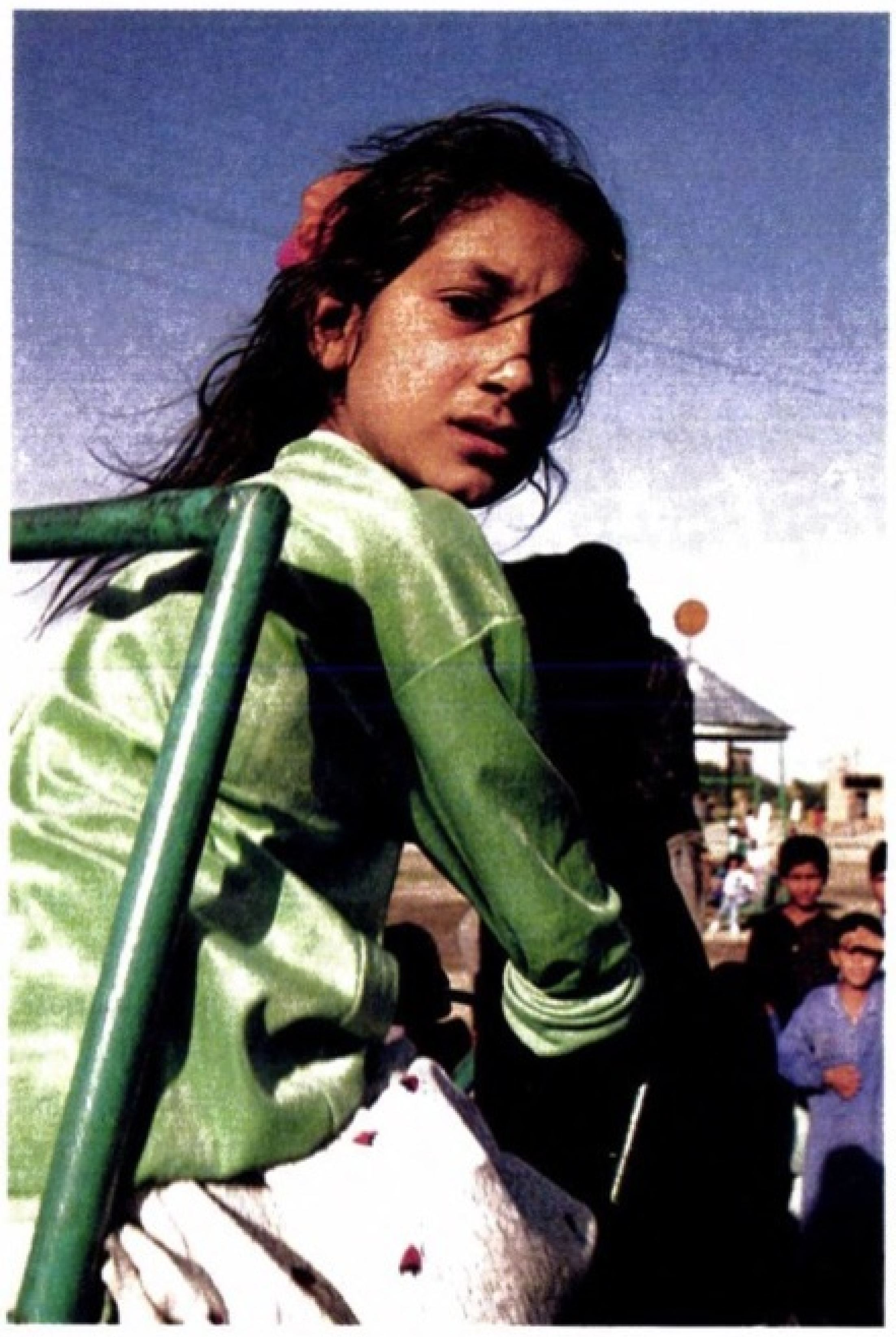
SOMEHOW a sightseeing tour of Kabul seems an obscenity. Amir Shah, our taxi driver, is insisting on taking us on what he calls the 'scenic route'. Everything is referred to in the past tense: 'This was our university', 'This was the Palace', 'This was one of our finest hotels'. There is a retrospective pride in Shah's voice which has to be responded to. 'It must have been lovely,' I mumble.

'I'll take you to the zoo,' Amir Shah says in an attempt to cheer us up. We pull up outside what must have been a pleasant garden, except all that's left now are twisted stumps of trees, their branches torn off by Kabul's residents for firewood. Cages line the walkways, but the bars are twisted steel and the walls nothing more than rubble. 'Most of the animals and birds have been stolen and cooked,' Amir Shah explains. 'But we do have a lion,' he says in an effort to make the visit worthwhile. 'I don't remember his name anymore. I just call him "Lion".'

Lion lies in the only cage that remains intact, his head resting sulkily on his huge front paws. His eyes are missing, and his face is heavily scarred. His mane of hair has been reduced to a few tufts. We stare at the sightless, bald lion who is now making a half-hearted attempt to stand up, and as he shuffles forward Amir Shah tells us Lion's story.

'Some mujahideen came to visit the zoo and they saw Lion. They goaded one of their friends into climbing into the cage, and dared him to touch Lion. Lion was sleeping, so he got out unhurt. Then the mujahideen dared him to go in again, but this time he touched a female and Lion attacked him. The mujahideen's brother threw in a hand grenade which blew up Lion's face, but it was too late. Lion killed him.'

It was hard to believe that the mangy specimen now growling weakly in front of us could have managed such aggression. 'Lion was taken to the Red Cross hospital,' Amir Shah said. 'He was in the best hospital in Kabul, and the doctors tried to save his sight. But they couldn't. He was too badly injured. They did the best they could.'



Another victim: young witness to senseless battle played on the streets of Khabul.

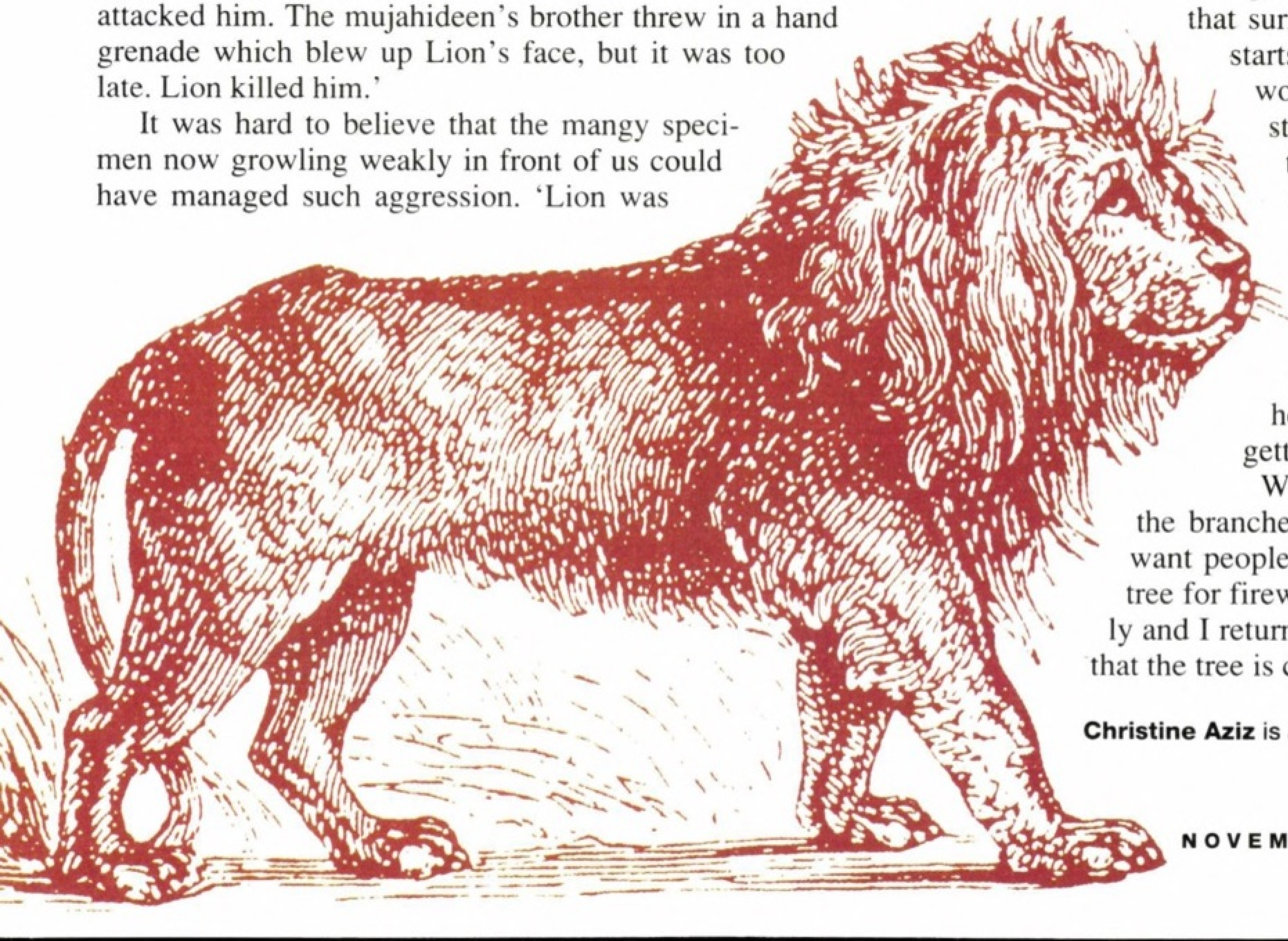
TOM DISSING

The people of Kabul clearly want Lion to live. It's as if this proud animal has become a symbol for the city itself and the grisly drama a metaphor for the senseless battles that have been played out in the city's streets. Both Lion and Kabul are the victims of a wanton destruction inspired by a warped belief in 'honour' and an obstinate, macho pride. If Lion dies then the foolishness of men has triumphed.

We settle silently into the back of Amir Shah's taxi. But by now we are in respectful awe of this man who can laugh, smile and joke while guiding us around such utter desolation. Like other Kabul residents he displays a courage and resilience that belies 16 years of war which began when the Russians arrived to occupy the city in 1979, and which turned into a civil war the moment they left, ten years later. Whatever destruction the Russians wreaked on Afghanistan, the mujahideen of the various warring factions managed to continue afterwards. Schools and universities were looted, books and equipment were sent to Pakistan to be sold, water pipes were used as target practice – making the water rehabilitation programme of a number of aid agencies almost impossible – homes were destroyed in the crossfire as rival groups fought each other from different ends of the city.

The sun begins to set, turning the snow on the mountains that surround Kabul a delicate rose-pink. Amir Shah starts to sing a song about love and a beautiful woman and then turns off into a side street. He stops the car. 'I want to show you where I used to live,' he says and ushers us out, warning us not to step off the road because of the landmines that litter the residential areas. He points to a wall standing amid a pile of rubble. 'That was my house,' he says. We notice that part of the wall has been freshly bricked up. 'That was the front door once,' he explains. 'But I bricked it up to stop people getting into the garden.'

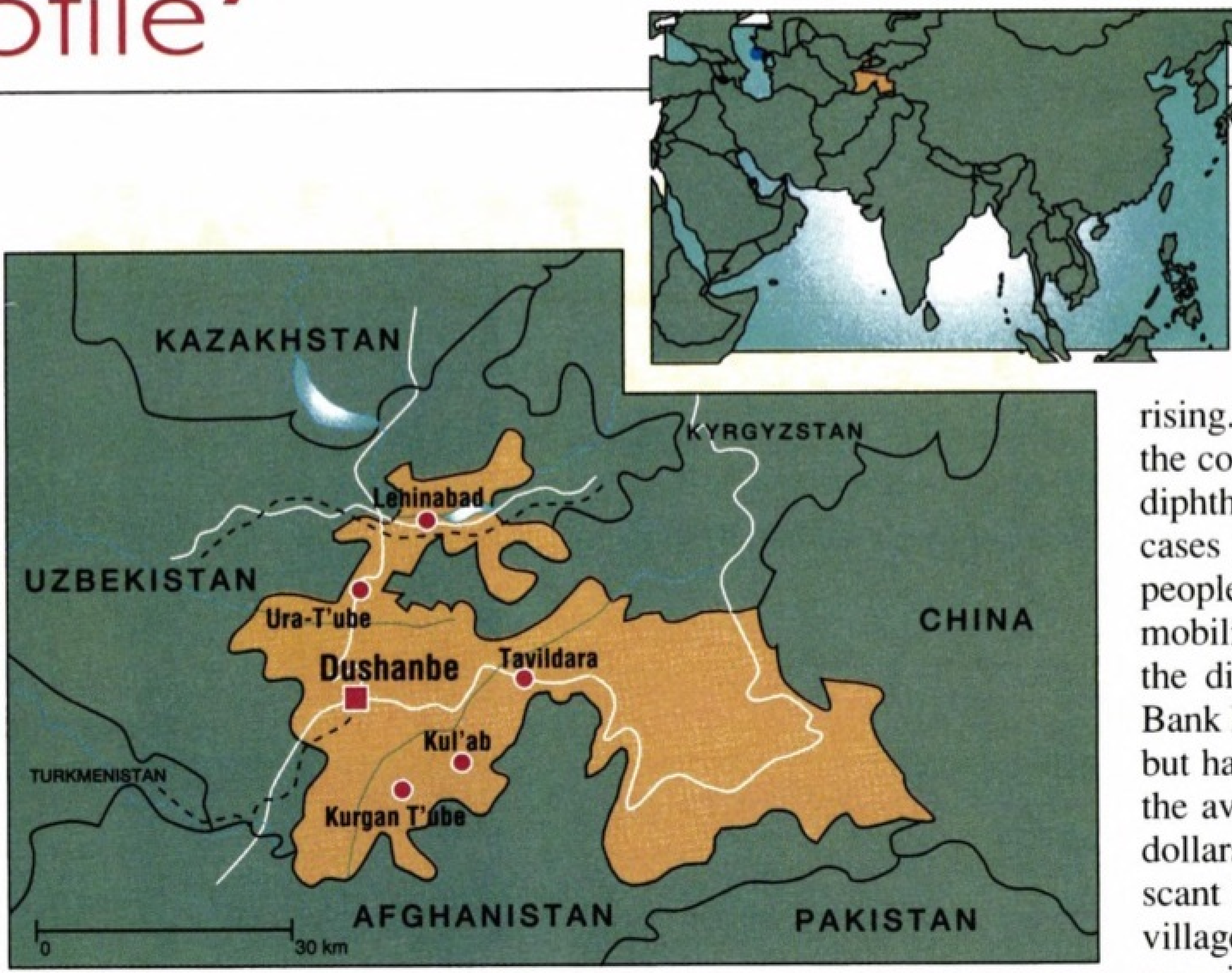
We can see no sign of a garden until we notice the branches of a tree rising out of the rubble. 'I didn't want people coming into my home and tearing down the tree for firewood. I wanted to protect it for when my family and I return home,' he said. In the fading light we notice that the tree is covered in white, sweet-smelling blossom. ■



Christine Aziz is a freelance journalist based in Amsterdam.

Country profile

Tajikistan



Of all the former Soviet republics, none has fallen further than Tajikistan – a small, mountainous state lodged in the heart of Central Asia. This nation of 5.9 million is still suffering from a four-year-old civil war that has claimed up to 50,000 lives and forced another half million into exile. The secessionist struggle in Chechnya may have garnered more headlines, but the Tajik body-count rivals, if not exceeds, the Chechen figure.

Always the poorest republic, Tajikistan delivered less than one per cent of the USSR's GNP in the final year of its existence. Since gaining independence in 1991, however, it has been caught in a limbo – between Communism and Islam, reform and repression. The neo-Communist regime of President Imomali Rakhmonov may control the capitol of Dushanbe, but much of the country remains out of control, and the workforce that once harvested the vast cotton fields has been reduced to hunting and gathering.

Routinely characterized as 'ethnic', the war followed the country's traditional regional fault lines, pitting powerful and weak groups created by Moscow during Soviet rule against each other. Broadly this meant the developed north fought the poor south and valley regions.

The war saw atrocities on both sides, but its lasting legacy lies in the south, where the mud-brick *kishloqi*, the villages scattered across the cotton lands, became killing fields. The conflict destroyed a vast swathe of the south, as the victorious Popular Front burned village after village of Gharmis and Pamiris. Cleansed of undesirables, today many of these *kishloqi* have been bulldozed beyond recognition.

Now the bloodletting is localized. Except for periodic assassinations in Dushanbe, the conflict is centered around the remote town of Tavildara at the edge of the Pamir mountains. The regime is hanging on, but only in the shadow of Russian tanks. Russia is here – with 25,000 troops – to secure a sphere of influence in its so-called 'near abroad'.

The Rakhmonov Government has also earned a reputation as the most repressive in the former USSR. Most dissenters have been silenced by prison-terms, exile or assassination. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists rated Tajikistan the most dangerous place in the world for journalists – 41 have been killed since 1991.

'The Russians are quite happy with this low-intensity conflict,' says one of the 44 UN military observers here. 'Keeping things on a low boil doesn't cost them much, and it justifies their presence.'

But the boil may be rising. Last year, the UN reports, the country set a world record for diphtheria epidemics, with 4,455 cases recorded. Only after 333 people had died did the regime mobilize health workers to halt the disease's spread. The World Bank has been visiting since 1993 but has yet to loan a dollar, while the average Tajik earns about six dollars a month. Dushanbe has scant heating or hot water. In the villages, there are few of the amenities of civilization.

Tajikistan can claim the semblances of sovereignty. There is a new currency – the Tajik 'rubl' instead of the Russian 'rouble' – and a new Constitution and Parliament. It is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the UN, the IMF, the World Bank and even President Clinton's $150-million Central Asian-American Enterprise Fund. But given the bloody birth of the regime, its dependency on Russia and its Central Asian neighbours, sovereignty has yielded little more than a soapbox for the triumphant Popular Front, and a treasure-chest for redistributing their war booty. ■

Andrew Meier

AT A GLANCE

MIA FOSTER

Leader President Imomali Rakhmonov

Economy GNP per capita $470 (Russia $2,340, Switzerland $35,760).
Monetary unit: Tajik rubl
The country's economic fortunes still depend on Russia – and on cotton, which is by far the biggest export, accounting for more than half of all crop production. The mountainous terrain means only 7% of land is suitable for agriculture – and most of that needs a damaging level of irrigation. Private land ownership is still barred, though as of 1993 over 300,000 people leased land for full-time private farming.

People 5.9 million.

Health Infant mortality 63 per 1,000 live births (Canada 6 per 1,000).

Culture Tajik 58%, Uzbek 23% Slav 10%. Unlike neighbouring countries, most people are of Persian rather than Turkic descent.
Religion: Islam, of the Sunni strain.
Languages: Tajik is the official language – it derives from Persian. Russian is still the language of business.

Sources: *The Asia & Pacific Review 1996; The State of the World's Children 1996; The World: A Third World Guide 1995/96;* information supplied by the author.

Never previously profiled

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★
There is precious little income in Tajikistan, and what there is lies in the hands of the anointed few.

LITERACY ★★★★
Estimated at 98%. One of the few upsides of the Soviet legacy.

SELF-RELIANCE ★
The Tajiks survived the Soviet nightmare on Moscow's subsidies. Left to their own cotton fields and failing factories, the country could not last long.

FREEDOM ★
Between the strong arm of the ruling regime and Moscow's shadow, not much room for ordinary Tajiks to manoeuvre.

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★
There are exceptions, of course, but the norm is still for women to have multiple children and work both in the home and in the fields.

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★
Officially 70 years, but this estimate dates from before the war and will have fallen sharply since (Russia 68 years).

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★
No opposition parties are registered. Few dissenters are allowed to speak out in public. The regime recently lifted its arrest warrant on former presidential candidate, Davlat Khudonazarov, a secular liberal now in exile in Moscow – but he still has not returned to his homeland for fear of his life.

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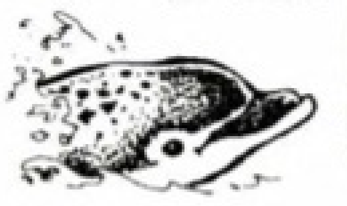

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AD184

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* to call for immediate withdrawal of Indonesian military forces from East Timor and full United Nations responsibility for protection of the civilian population

East Timor Week 11-17 November 1996

For further info on East Timor Week or the activities of BCET please contact: P.O.Box 2349, London E1 3HX. Tel/fax: 0181 985 1127. Email: maggie@gn.apc.org

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1
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Piquant Recipes from Africa, Asia & Latin America for Western Kitchens PLUS Food Facts and Spice Guide
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3
eye to eye
women
NEW
6
world in your kitchen calendar
East Africa
South Africa
Kenya
5
The WORLD in Your Kitchen
4
7
9
The New Internationalist FOOD Book
8
1997 ONE WORLD ALMANAC
June
10

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